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TO ONE

WHOSE GLORIOUS PRIVILEGE IT HAS BEEN

TO BE THE SOLE FOUNDRESS

OF

A CHURCH

FOR THE USE AND BENEFIT OF A POOR AND NEGLECTED

POPULATION; AND WHO,

IN THE ARRANGEMENTS OF THAT CHURCH,

DID NOT FORGET,

THAT WHERE RICH AND POOR MEET TOGETHER BEFORE

GOD

THE MAKER OF THEM ALL,

THERE IT IS FITTING THAT THE DISTINCTIONS OF

WORLDLY RANK SHOULD BE LAID ASIDE,

This Volume is dedicated,

WITH ADMIRATION AND DEEP AFFECTION.

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IN order to prevent misconception, it seems advisable to say a few words in reference to the object with which the ensuing tale was written.

No one can be at all conversant with parochial matters, without being painfully aware that Pews are a never-ending, still-beginning subject of animosity and ill-will. It seems as if the sin of making worldly distinctions between rich and poor in that House where all are equal, had brought with it its own punishment from the very first, in the strifes and contentions which have invariably attended the allotment and pos-

session of Pews. Almost every Clergyman, probably, has been called upon to allay angry feelings, and to endeavour to make peace between parties who have contrived to quarrel with one another on some point connected with their pew-rights, real or imaginary;—almost every Clergyman, perhaps, has been told by some ill-conditioned member of his flock, that he does not choose to come to Church till the Churchwardens have given him a Pew.

There seems a reasonable ground, however, for hope, that the tide of fashion which has set in so long and so steadily in favour of these "sleeping-boxes," is at length beginning to turn. Good people have become thoroughly ashamed of them, and of themselves for having tolerated them; all the new Churches which have any pretensions to Catholic arrangement, have got rid of them; and as it generally happens that the steady resolution of a few influential persons

constantly directed to one point, is, in the end, successful in carrying that point, we may reasonably expect that when the various Church-building Societies have shewn their resolution to discourage the system, by withholding grants from all Churches in which the erection of inclosed seats is contemplated, we shall gradually find people disposed to return to open sittings.* Meanwhile, there is one circumstance which may well cause the lovers of Pews to look with apprehension as to the results of the fashion of which they are so fond. The Pews of the wealthy few have driven, in many places, the Poor from our Churches. One great box after another has been erected, till there is no longer

* While this sheet is passing through the press, it has been announced by the Sub-committee of the Cambridge Camden Society, who have been at the pains of inquiring into, and reporting upon, the comparative accommodation and expence of pews and open benches, that this very important fact has been established, that where, the comparison is *most favourable for pews*, with respect to the numbers accommodated, *pews involve a loss of twenty per cent as compared with open sittings.*

room for the humbler ranks of worshippers. And what has been the consequence? The many, now rendered lawless and unmanageable, because no longer under the constraining influence of the Church, are beginning, in our large towns, to give the selfish few hints, which it will be their wisdom and their safety to profit by ere it be too late. "It is not a little striking," as Mr. Faber has truly observed in one of his beautiful tracts on the Church and her Offices,—"it is not a little striking that in several places of late, the people have come in bodies to occupy the Churches and Cathedrals, and assert their equal right to them. This shows that even this trifle has created a soreness, and therefore to a thinking person *has ceased to be a trifle*."*

"What, then, it may be asked, is it proposed to throw our Churches open, like those in foreign countries, and let the congregation seat

* See Faber's "Churchman's Politics in Disturbed Times," p. 44.

themselves where, and as they can,—one day here, and another day there, as chance may direct, or as places may happen to be vacant?" By no means: all that is insisted on is, the necessity of getting rid of distinctions between rich and poor in God's House, and utterly destroying the great unsightly packing-boxes which at present deform our Churches.

There ought to be in every Church a certain number of seats, free and unappropriated, for the use of strangers and casual visitors; but these need not form more than a very small portion of the whole: all the rest should be appropriated; every householder in the parish should have a definite place allotted to him, for himself and his family. English people have inherent in them a sort of independence, which coming (rightly or not, I do not say) to Church with them, makes them like to feel sure of a seat: again, there is another English feeling, shame-

facedness, which ought not to be set at nought and which we have all seen painfully roused when some young lad or country-woman, on arriving at Church, finds their usual seat pre-occupied; and, not to mention other circumstances, there does seem somewhat in the English character and habits which makes *appropriated* seats desirable. Let all seats, therefore, in our Churches, be appropriated (with the exception of a few for strangers); but let them all be uninclosed,—of one uniform pattern,—those for the poor being as good and as well-placed as those for the rich,—and let them be so arranged as that "high and low, rich and poor," shall worship "*one with another.*"

It is the object of the ensuing pages to point out the evils of the existing system; and although I do not think it necessary to specify distinctly whether any such place as Milford

Malvoisin really exists, and have resolved to refer my readers to the Clergy List for further particulars respecting the gentleman whose name appears at the end of the Introduction, I am sanguine in the hope, that even though their curiosity should remain ungratified, they will give the matters proposed to their notice a very serious consideration, and that though as yet they may have been lovers of Pews, they will henceforward look upon those "eye-sores and heart-sores," (as Archdeacon Hare so truly calls them) with less tenderness and affection than heretofore.

Martinmas,
MDCCCXII.

Introduction.

AMONG the many passages in Walton's Life of Hooker, which shew how little the habits and feelings of that good man were in accordance with the easy and self-satisfied religion of the present day, is one which has always struck me very forcibly. It is recorded of him, that he "did usually every Ember-Week take from the parish-clerk the key of the church-door, into which place he retired every day, and locked himself up for many hours; and did the like most Fridays

and other days of Fasting." A Christian Priest resorting alone to the scene of his public ministrations, —(the world shut out,—God and His holy angels the only witnesses,) for the purpose of bewailing with prayer and fasting, with self-examination and humiliation, his manifold sins of omission and commission, his weaknesses, his negligences, and his ignorances;—kneeling hour after hour before the Altar,—now prostrate in remorseful contrition for the past,—now earnestly imploring help and strength for the future;—now interceding for his flock, and now extending his petitions in behalf of the Holy Church throughout all the world; and this continued, week by week, season after season, unseduced by the joyous sunshine of the summer's day, undeterred by the mist and darkness of winter's cold, through years of increasing devotion, and more and more austere self-discipline,—what a lovely picture is this to look upon! what an example for imitation in these evil days! and how grievous to think (as testifying the coldness, lowness, and deadness of the present age) that for a clergyman to adopt such a course *now*, would (as indisputably it would) expose him to

the charge of religious quixotism, or of leaning to Popish observances!

I dare not add the humble testimony of my own experience in favour of Hooker's pious custom,—for that which was the result of deep and ardent devotion in him, has been in my case too irregularly and too seldom practised, to be more than the effect of mere transient feeling; and yet the interior of a Church, during the silence and solitude of its week-day desertion, would be no untried place of meditation with me. There is one venerable and dearly-loved fabric especially, which I now seldom see, but into which, whenever I am able to revisit it, I never fail to enter, and linger alone amid its aisles, and hold communion with the unseen world around me. It is there that my childish feet first trod on holy ground; there, with mingled feelings of pride in being admitted to so great a privilege,—of wonder, and of awe, I first heard the public service of the Church, and tried to follow and love the prayers which I long had known that all good people loved. There, as Christmas after Christmas returned through all the happy years of boyhood, I was sure to find myself in all the

bliss of family re-union, with the same dear friends and companions beside me, and the same associations, the same '*admonitus locorum et temporum*,' growing stronger year by year. There I have lived to offer up the prayers, and administer the blessed Sacraments. There, I have seen kinsfolk and acquaintance committed to the dust in sure and certain hope; there, are some sleeping whom I have loved as I never can love again; there, now that my own work is nearly done, I would gladly lay my bones beside their bones, and not part in death with those from whom in life I was not divided!

It was in the closing hours of an autumn day that I last paid my solitary visit to this dear old pile. The wind was high without, and the withering leaves were whirled in eddies against the lattices which rattled in the blast; but this was the only sound that greeted my ears; and though in parts of the sacred edifice the light was growing obscure and dim, (for it lies embosomed among lofty trees,) still, ever and anon, a gleam of the setting sun found its way through some of the windows, gilding all the objects on which it fell with yellow rays, which gradually

assumed a ruddier tint, till merging into deep crimson, it waxed fainter and fainter, and gradually faded away as twilight advanced.

"And thus," thought I within myself, as I stood gazing on shaft, and niche, and monument, glowing in ruby light, "thus hath it been year by year,—thus will it be while this old fabric stands. Evening after evening this glorious scene is renewed;—morning after morning, when the darkness of a few hours is past,—these walls, the Temple of His presence, and round which the faithful dead are sleeping, will be silent witnesses of the glory of God, and of the type of His revivifying power. 'One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another: there is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them.'"

"And while day and night have thus rolled on, preaching with mute eloquence to such as would receive it, how many varying emotions have agitated the breasts of those who have worshipped within these walls!—the bridegroom in his joy and pride,—the mother bending at the font over her new-born child,—the mourner weeping over the dead

whom he is burying out of his sight,—all have had their *deepest* feelings in this place! Then, too, to what fervours of devotion, to what exalted faith, to what sincere penitence, humility, stedfastness, self-resignation, has this House of Prayer been witness! The record of them may have passed away from man's remembrance,—nay, by man they may never have been known; but they are noted and known, registered and preserved, where they will not be forgotten. 'God's kalendar,' as Fuller says, 'is better than man's best martyrologies; and many a name is written in the Book of Life, which on earth has passed into oblivion.'"

"Aye, too," I continued, as one course of thought led to another, "how great have been the vicissitudes not merely of human things, but of religion herself, since Saxon Herman raised the first rude oratory on this site! how various the phases under which our branch of the Church Catholic has appeared before the eyes of men!—First, as winning her way by purity and simplicity, and making head against the idolatry of our forefathers; then, stretching forth her boughs as a goodly cedar, taking root,

and filling the land; yet, alas! waxing wanton with temporal prosperity, and defiling herself with error and superstition. Next, suffering for her sins in all the sacrilege and troubles of the Reformation; yet, rising therefrom, so far purified and exalted, as to be deemed worthy to suffer persecution and temporary overthrow from that base puritanical faction to which the Reformation itself (for essential good is rarely unaccompanied with partial evil) was permitted to give birth. Then, profiting by the blessing of tribulation, exerting herself once more, yet soon destined to become enfeebled under the chilling effects of the Revolution, — growing more apathetic and worldly, as she became more and more enslaved and trammelled by the State; and now, at length, as one may hope, awaking from her long, long sleep, trimming her lamp, girding her loins, putting on her strength, and arming herself against the day of battle,—that great and final contest between good and evil, to which the course of all things is so surely and rapidly hastening. Manifold, indeed, have been these changes; yet, whether they who assert, or those who deny the Papal Supremacy, were minis-

tering here, these old grey walls have had the same calming, soothing influence upon successive generations, and have led the thoughts of multitudes to that place where all are one in Christ Jesus,—to a kingdom which is not of this world,—to a peace which the world can neither give nor take away."

"And yet a briefer space than eight hundred years,"—it was thus the train of meditation proceeded,—"a briefer space than that will suffice to tell of the effects of chance and change. Of those well-remembered faces which I used to see here Sunday after Sunday while I was a child, how few are still to be found among us! The generation which then was old, has long since been swept from the face of the earth; and even of my cotemporaries but one or two, here and there remain. All the brightest, and fairest, and best,—all whose natures seemed to connect them more with heaven than earth,—the gentlest, and most single-hearted, the true, the innocent, the kindly-affectioned, — with some few precious exceptions who have been left for our comfort and example, have been taken long ago, (blessed be God for His mercy in having given them

to us at all!) they have long since entered that land where there are more who are like them, than are left in this world! Their sunny locks have been laid in the dust; and the green grass is growing, and flowers are springing above their heads. And it is well,—their brows were unfurrowed by care and sorrow, and their faces had not gathered blackness through sin, and exposure to the world's foul and withering air! It is well:—

> 'Requiem eternam dona eis, Domine,
> Et lux perpetua luceat eis!' "

"But of those who yet survive, some, indeed, like myself, though dwelling at a distance, still revisit the home of our youth occasionally,—but the majority are scattered far asunder, with objects, and interests, and affections, which have nothing in common with those of childhood. And as for the few, the very few who have continued here through the whole of their pilgrimage, they now seem like spectres haunting the scene of their former short-lived happiness; or rather like soldiers seamed and scarred with wounds, who are gazing on the tombs of their comrades, and who sigh wistfully, as the features of the

dead present themselves to their memories, and their once joyous voices come ringing on their ears. But when I look on these grey walls, I remember that I am but sharing the emotions of whole races of Christian pilgrims who have gone before, and if I have the same sorrows with them, I may cheer myself with the same hopes, and stay myself on the same promises."

"And yet," I reflected further, as a fresh train of thought suggested itself, "though this House of God, has in some sense remained the same, amid the vicissitudes of ages, even here, as I look around me, I can trace the lamentable effects of worldly fashion intruding where it ought not, and feel that to one who has Catholic feelings it is *not* the same as it was, even within my own recollection. When I was a boy, that old, dark cavern of a pew, which, hides one half of the rood screen, was the only one to be found in this Church. There were none of the distinctions of worldly rank kept up in God's presence: we all knelt and worshipped side by side, high and low, rich and poor, one with another. We felt that we were all on an equality, in that all were

miserable sinners who needed pardon; in that all were petitioners for the same gifts of grace; in that we were all members one of another. But we have been gradually forgetting our privileges of Christian fellowship, and fostering even in holy things a spirit of pride, luxury, and exclusiveness. Scarce a year has gone by in which somebody has not craved permission to erect his pew,—the license has been granted, and so at length the poor of Christ's flock, instead of having (as they ought, if there is to be a distinction) the best and choicest places reserved for them (as is meet for those who need all possible advantages of external aid towards hearing, and understanding the service),—the poor are forced by these encroaching pews nearer and nearer to the door, and as far as possible from the officiating Minister; nay, in many places, through the multitudes of these wicked abominations we have left room for no other description of seats in the Church. We have thrust forth the poor from the House of God, and verily we shall have our reward."

"Alas, we know not what we are doing! Our pride, our luxury, and our exclusiveness have suc-

ceeded in disuniting almost all the ties which of old united the several classes of our population: the rich have well nigh alienated the hearts of the poor. One link yet holds them together,—the strongest of all,—the bond of Church-fellowship: break that, and there is nothing left to hold the social system together. We have sown the wind; may God have mercy upon those who live to see the whirlwind harvest!"

The twilight was now gathering so fast around me, that I rose from my seat, and quitting the Church proceeded homewards; but the last subject on which I had been reflecting still kept its place in my thoughts, and as I pondered on the unmitigated evil of the pew-system (for indeed I could find no one argument in favour of it), and recalled to mind the various mischiefs which even within my own limited experience have accrued from it,—as I reflected on the ill-will which it is sure to engender, the envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, which the possessing or the desire of possessing pews continually causes among neighbours, I felt that if the subject were once fairly set before right-minded

people,—if the system was exhibited in its true light to them, they would be the first to break through it, and by turning their own pews into open sittings, shew that in so far as such a trifling act can bear witness to it, they are anxious to prove themselves in something more than name, disciples of Him, Who for our sakes became poor, and of no reputation.

At least I hoped so; and considering how I might do this in the least offensive way, I thought I would trace the history of some pew from its erection to its removal,—not indeed with any great regularity or in a continuous manner, for that would be beside my purpose,—but just bringing out the chief evils of the system as they might develope themselves in any parish, and thus endeavouring to make a useful book, which may set people thinking, and incline them to smile, and perhaps sigh at themselves, and, I trust, teach them to think less of themselves and their own ease, and more of the Poor of Christ, with whom it is their great privilege to be fellow-heirs, and fellow-citizens.

WILLOUGHBY GILPIN.

BOOK I.

The Puritans.

"False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand: fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey"

SHAKSPEAR.

CHAPTER I.

The Wake.

A sect, whose chief devotion lies
In odd perverse antipathies;
In falling out with that or this,
And finding somewhat still amiss:
More peevish, cross, and splenetic
Than dog distract, or monkey sick.
That with more care keep Holy-day
The wrong, than others the right way:
Compound for sins they are inclin'd to;
By damning those they have no mind to,
Still so perverse and opposite,
As if they worshipp'd God for spite.

Hudibras.

Until within the last few years the little village of Milford Malvoisin was as obscure and unfrequented a spot as it was at the period when our tale commences. Though situated in one of the midland

counties, and at no great distance from the county town, it has had the fortune or misfortune of lying off the main road, and being only to be approached by narrow winding lanes, which in winter are almost impassable from the tenacious nature of their marly soil, it has come to be looked upon in the neighbourhood as a wild, out-of-the-way place, and beyond its vicinity it seems to be so little known that we have looked for it in vain in more than one map. An event has recently occurred, which, (as it will be seen hereafter) has brought the sequestered hamlet into connection with one of the most public thoroughfares in the kingdom, and this circumstance, together with the interest which our readers will of course feel in the annals we are about to lay before them, will certainly make the locality an illustrious place in after times; but if it *does* become great, it will only be because, as in Malvolio's case, "greatness has been thrust upon" it.

Originally, as its name implies, the powerful Norman family of the Malvoisins, Mauvisins, or Mavesyns, were lords of the manor: but neither old Raoul de Malvoisin, to whom it was granted by the Conqueror,

nor any of his successors, appear to have resided on the spot. The inhabitants have continued from time immemorial to be the same description of persons,—a few small gentry, yeomen, and agricultural labourers; and as if every thing connected with it was destined to remain stationary, its population was very much the same from the days of Queen Elizabeth to the accession of Queen Victoria. Yet into this secluded nook, disloyalty and irreligion found their way; and when for the sins of the people the Great Rebellion was permitted to burst forth, and overwhelm for a time the most valued institutions in Church and State, events took place at Milford Malvoisin which exhibited the spirit of Puritanism in its true colours.

The first of May, 1643, was as fine a spring morning as ever dawned; calm, and warm, and bright, it was just the May-day of which poets have sung, and the young and happy dreamed. March winds and April showers were felt no more; the sun was shining in a clear blue sky, the air was soft and balmy, the birds were carolling from tree to tree,

the buds were bursting, the wild flowers opening, and the meadows were clothed once more in tender green; and if men's inward feelings could have taken their impression from what was beautiful and exhilarating in the face of nature, instead of being acted upon by doubts and fears and all the anxieties which must needs arise from connection with this evil, darkening world, the congregation which was winding its way to the early service at Milford Church should have been a right joyous company. It was the festival of St. Philip and St. James, the Holy Apostles to whom the little church was dedicated, and consequently the village Wake was about to commence. Of old this had been a happy time of family re-union and cheerful hospitality. Children returned from school or service to visit their parents; friends who had not met for a year before, were now mingling in each other's society, and if here and there places were vacant which at the last anniversary were filled, and thoughts of the absent or the dead brought tears into the eyes of the survivors, there were comforts mingled with the pain, the mourners were at least, sorrowing *together*, they

were *sharing* in feelings with which the stranger intermeddleth not. The substantial yeoman spread his board, and invited kinsman and neighbour to partake of beef and pudding, and potent ale, and when he was giving his own feast he did not forget his poorer neighbours, for besides the wheat and milk for frumenty which he bestowed on his labourers as a matter of course, he generally contrived to add a portion of meat which should at least suffice for dinner on the Wake-Sunday. The May-pole, too, was not forgotten; the same hands that had decked it with wreaths and garlands before the sun was high, were joined in the merry dance around it, as the shades of evening drew on, and a day whose commencement had been sanctified by prayer and attendance on the Church's ordinances, and had been spent in harmless mirth and social relaxation, was now brought to its close unmarked by riot and excess; for the presence and kindly intercourse of all ranks of society on such occasions, restrained each from forgetting what was due to the other,—and the unanimous respect which was paid to the Pastor of the parish, made young and old desirous that their

rejoicing should be of a nature which we would love to witness.

But such no longer was the wake at Milford Malvoisin; and the May-day of which we speak had none of the characteristics which it bore of old. England was now plunged in all the calamities of that Civil war, which was not brought to a close till the Altar and the Throne were in ruins. The battle of Edge-Hill, which had taken place in the preceding October, while claimed as a victory by both parties, had in reality been indecisive; and the local contests which occurred elsewhere, had not given any essential advantage to either party. All that had hitherto happened had only tended to exasperate both the Royalists and the Rebels, who were now arrayed against each other in the bitterest animosity. The winter, indeed, passed in comparative calm,—but it was only a momentary lulling of the tempest; and when spring approached to unlock her treasures, and dispense the blessings of the opening year, the fair land which she had been so long used to see enjoying the blessings of peace, now appeared before her as a scene of cruel and bloody discord, in which

every county, and town, and village,—nay, almost every family, was divided against itself.

And Milford Malvoisin formed no exception to the general rule. The mass of its population, indeed, continued loyal, and desired nothing less than to "meddle with those that are given to change;" but there were some who were suddenly smitten with the love of liberty and Presbyterianism,—and these made up in noise for what they wanted in number, and their behaviour presented a remarkable contrast to the quiet inactive bearing of their opponents.

However, "the Malignants," as it was then the fashion to call those who were faithful to their Church and King, were not hitherto in that depressed state at Milford in which they were to be found elsewhere; and accordingly the numbers who were proceeding to church on the festival of which we were speaking, were considerable; but, as we have already intimated, there was gloom upon their countenances, and they seemed anxious and disheartened. The fact was, that tidings had just arrived of an event which had taken place three days before, and which was anything but encouraging to the Royal prospects,—

It was told how Colonel Fielding had surrendered Reading to the Earl of Essex; and rumour with her thousand tongues had spread the false report that Prince Rupert had been slain, and that the King's troops were ready to throw down their arms.

No wonder that at such a time the wonted festivities of the village wake were laid aside. Few cared to visit their friends when the roads were full of troopers, whose love of plunder was at least equal to their patriotism, and who were seldom content to plunder without committing the additional crime of evil-intreating their victims. And, besides, who could even wish for merry-makings when God's judgments were so evidently in the earth? So there was no feasting that day at Milford; and if some of the youthful inhabitants of the parish sighed as they passed the prostrate May-pole,—(prostrate, because being especially hated by the Puritans, it had been sawn through, as it was suspected, by one Tristram Sugge, a zealous member of that party, on the night of the new year,) if, we say, some of the youthful parishioners sighed, it was less in selfish sorrow for the loss of a few hours gaiety, than with grave appre-

hension of the evils which were coming upon Church and State.

It is when men have such anxious thoughts, and clouds seem gathering around them on all sides that they are led to appreciate more fully, and feel most deeply "the soothing influence" (as it has been so happily called) of the Church service; and perhaps even now, when so many of us have ceased even to wish to live by the Church's ordinances, if a time of trouble were to arise, we should find ourselves falling back upon the Church-service as our greatest earthly happiness and comfort. But at the period of which we are speaking, God's House did not remain locked up, and empty, from week's-end to week's-end. The spirit of Puritanism had not yet obliterated the Calendar, had not yet made Sunday—("the Sabbath," as in their Judaizing spirit, they called the Lord's Day) the only day of public worship,—and turned the weekly festival of our Redeemer's resurrection into a dismal, cheerless day of austerity and gloom. Accordingly, though the circumstances were unfavourable to such an assembly, the congregation at Milford Church on the morning of which we are speaking,

was nearly as large as it had been in former years. A common feeling had drawn Churchmen nearer to the Church and to each other; and on that day the good Rector had no cause to complain with respect either to the attendance or devotion of his flock. Some of the open seats which belonged to Puritan families were empty,—for Mr. Dolben was no Calvinist, and had not the slightest affection for republican principles, or the presbyterian schism, and was of course denounced as "a dumb dog," "a favourer of popery," "a prelatical hireling," "a wicked, scandalous malignant," and so forth. Consequently, Mr. Blote who was the leader of the revolutionary party at Milford, had withdrawn from the Church, and set up a conventicle in his own barn, where he sometimes preached himself, and sometimes listened with great unction to the spiritual harangues of one Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle, an itinerant vendor of tripe and cow-heels, who was held to have a more than ordinary share of ministerial gifts and graces. But although Mr. Blote, and some of his friends and dependents had absented themselves from Milford Church, the event had caused very

little sensation in the parish, the only wonder seemed to be that when he had ceased to come to church (where his attendance had always been irregular), he should choose to go any where else, for it was generally supposed that he was a man of no religion at all. Nobody, therefore, missed Mr. Blote, and nobody would have thought about him, but for an incident which we are about to record, and which, as will be seen in the sequel, was destined to exercise a material influence on the fortunes of the Rector, parishioners, and church of Milford Malvoisin.

The morning prayers were concluded, and Mr. Dolben was in the act of administering the Holy Communion, (which was always celebrated on the festivals as well as on Sundays at Milford) when the Church door was thrown open, and a large unwieldy-looking man entered with a hawking-pole in his hand, and a couple of spaniels at his heels. The high crowned hat (which on coming into the House of God he still kept up on his head), the sad-coloured cloak, and plain band of lawn were in accordance with the fashion of the Puritans, while on the other hand, a doublet of green velvet, slashed up the

front, and puffed with crimson, and an embroidered baldric or sword-belt, worn sash-wise over the right shoulder, seemed to intimate that although the velvet was worn and weather-stained, and the embroidered sword-belt was tarnished, they were the habits most congenial to the taste of the wearer, while the more recent additions to his apparel had been assumed as an after-thought. In person, Mr. Blote (for it was he) was, as we have said, heavy and awkward; he looked swollen and unwholesome, while his coarse red face suggested the thought that he was as fond of the ale-barrel, as he was gross in his food. When to this it is added that Mr. Blote's expression of countenance was surly and over-bearing, we have left nothing unsaid which can complete a very unpleasant picture.

Such being the man, his actions were soon seen to be in accordance with his physiognomy. On entering the church he apparently did not perceive that the Holy Eucharist was being administered, for he whistled to his dogs to follow him, and was proceeding up the nave towards his own sitting when the figure of the Clergyman caught his eye, and old

impressions, or his better nature prevailing for the moment, he paused and sat down where he was, and at the same time speaking in an under tone to his dogs (who were pattering about the seats snuffing and whining), "Quiet, Sir! down Prelate,—down Pope! down!" he caused them to lie silent at his feet. He then leisurely surveyed the scene before him, and from time to time scowled at such members of the congregation as returning from the Altar to where they had been sitting, gazed in surprise as they passed him, at so unwonted and shocking a sight.

In a few minutes the service was concluded, and the congregation retired, the Clergyman, and the clerk being the only parties left besides Mr. Blote himself. When Mr. Dolben had taken off his surplice, he approached Mr. Blote, who rose to meet him, and with an awkward, and somewhat embarrassed air proceeded to lift off the broad-brimmed steeple-crowned hat which he was wearing jauntily on one side of his head.

"Nay, Sir," said Mr. Dolben, when he saw the movement, "never doff your hat to me, if you

think scorn to doff it to Him whose servant I am. This is His House, and He has been present among us according to His promise: if you will not reverence Him, do not aggravate the wrong by reverencing me."

Mr. Blote had by this time taken his hat off, and now held it in his hand, twirling it, and twisting it, as if it burnt his fingers, and as if uncertain whether to lay it down or put it on his head again.

"It is so long," continued the Rector, "since I have seen you within these walls, that I hardly know whether you come among us as a friend or a foe, but whichever way it is, I am sure you will so far respect our feelings as to send your dogs out of church."

"I don't see what harm either my hat or dogs do you, Master Dolben, or what there is more in a church than in any other place: but I fear you will never cast off your papistical prejudices; however the dogs may go if you will;—Pope! Prelate!" (addressing the spaniels) "get along home.—— I always name dogs, Master Rector, after things I despise."

Mr. Dolben made no answer to this gratuitous insult, so Mr. Blote continued: "I never saw such an awful popish sight as you presented at the table there, with your idolatrous vestments on,—fit only for a priest of Baal; and your gold and silver cups and platters and candlesticks, more like the house of Dagon or Rimmon, or Belshazzar's feast, than an assembly of Christian people. Ah! friend, friend, these things need reformation; and because of these things an oppressed people have been forced to take up the sword. And I tell you and the parishioners of this place, that if you don't mend yourselves, other folks will come and mend you. The committee of scandalous ministers is sitting, and they are not likely to pass you by, unless you join the godly and well-affected; and a searching inquiry is being set on foot after such as be favourers of Popery in their churches and ministrations. Come hither, friend Degge, let me see that cup."

This was addressed to the parish-clerk, and had reference to a beautiful chalice which was standing on the holy table: but Degge moved not, and only looked at Mr. Dolben, who said: "The good man

knows that it is not the custom for any to presume to enter within the rails, except such as be in holy orders,* and therefore he does not bring it to you: but you can see it well enough from the rails."

"Oh, I care nothing about your cups and platters, and consecrated mummeries: I have seen enough to sicken one; and I see enough from this distance to make me blush for you. Why! there are carved and molten images all round the cup!"

"There is a representation of the crucifixion upon it."

"Ha! what? a crucifix!" exclaimed Mr. Blote; "it is indeed time that things be amended among us. Why, that arch-traitor William Laud,—that rochetted viper,—that sty of all the pestilential filth that infects the commonwealth,—(praised be mercy that his talons are cut, and he is now in that place whence he never will come forth but to die the death, and go to perdition,†)—why, even the prelate at Lambeth desired not to make matters worse than I find them

* See Bp. Montagu's Articles of Inquiry. Tit. iii. § 11.

† It is, of course, quite impossible to bring before the reader any thing like a true picture of the language applied by the Puritans to the Clergy of the Church of England; but a specimen of the sort of abuse then uttered, may remind the reader very forcibly of the language of

in this place. Verily, we must make an end of such Papistry. I charge you, Master Degge, that those cups and platters are forthcoming whenever I call for them, as witnesses against you."

"Thank you for the hint, you crop-eared hypocrite," muttered Obadiah Degge to himself. "I will take good care of them, so please your worship," was his audible reply.

Mr. Dolben had borne all this very patiently; and as it was no use replying to such a person, he merely waited till Mr. Blote had finished his harangue, and then quietly asked whether he had any business with him, as he had other engagements.

"Pray, Sir," said Mr. Blote, "have you ever heard of such things as petitions by the parishioners against 'scandalous ministers?'"

divers of the Whig advocates of Ecclesiastical reform. "The Clergy," says a puritanical writer, quoted in Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy, (p. 48), "are a stinking heap of atheistical and Roman rubbish, a rotten rabble of slanderous priests, and spurious bastard sons of Belial, who, by their affected ignorance and laziness, their false doctrines, and idolatrous and superstitious practices in God's worship,—by their most abominable evil lives and conversations, had, like Hophni and Phineas, made the Lord's ordinances to be abhorred by the people."—"Unpopular,"—"lazy,"—"Popish!" This has been the cuckoo-cry of the last ten years.

"Yes, Sir, I heard the other day, that two or three sectaries in the next parish, had petitioned against their lawful minister for having got a purple velvet cloth for the communion-table, and for speaking against the Parliament and Mr. Pym."

"And do you know the result, Master Dolben?"

"No, Sir, I have heard nothing further."

"Then I can tell you that your friend Dr. Grey has been sent for as a delinquent by the Serjeant-at-arms: and gentlemen in his case are not apt to get off without heavy fines and long imprisonment."

"Well, they may fine him, but he has little enough to pay withal; and for imprisonment, a man at eighty-five has not long to wait for a release."

"Very true: but *you*, Master Dolben are richer, and many years younger than Dr. Grey; are you prepared to be petitioned against?"

"I trust so," said the clergyman, "for I have long been looking for it."

"Unless you take care, you are likely to find what you look for. Lo! I come this day to warn you, that I can no longer tolerate scandals; and though it will be a sore loss to me not to sit under

that pious, painful minister, Master Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle, and to be forced to see you clothed in a popish rag, dealing out your cold pottage from yonder calves' coop," (pointing to the pulpit)—"yet I shall do my duty,"—("That will be something new," muttered Obadiah Degge)—"and shall come and listen to what you teach the poor benighted creatures, who call themselves Churchmen. And I shall endeavour to induce worthy Mr. Mumgrizzle, who is a light and a pillar"—("A rushlight and a caterpillar," once more muttered the clerk)—"to come with me, that he may judge of your doctrine, and the truth be established."

"You will do as you please in that matter," answered Mr. Dolben.

"Of course, I shall," replied the Puritan; "but I shall not demean myself by sitting on yonder bench with . . . ."

"Your fellow-sinners:—no, I warrant you! the saints are to have it all their own way now!" exclaimed Obadiah Degge, no longer in an under tone, but at the full pitch of his voice.

Mr. Blote turned pale with rage, and raised his

hawking-pole for the purpose of striking the indiscreet teller of home truths; but Mr. Dolben interfered, and bidding the clerk to be silent, listened with some curiosity as to what his neighbour would say next.—"I am not going to sit cheek by jowl," continued Mr. Blote, "on a bench with ignorant beasts of ploughmen, and such like scum; but I shall do as our people have done, and are doing, elsewhere; I shall build me a Pew of wainscoat, and I have told that pious man, Tristram Sugge, to come here and erect it; and he promised to be here by this time. Albeit he has some conscientious scruples with respect to the lawfulness of entering this place; 'for what are churches,' said he, 'but the old nests of Popery into which the cuckoos of Prelacy have dropped addled eggs,—and what are Churchmen, but vermin that devour the vitals?' "

"Alas!" cried Mr. Dolben, "and is it even come to this, that men should presume to bring their pride and exclusiveness into the presence of Him who is no respecter of persons, and in whose House all are equal? I have heard of this wicked fashion: I know that in towns the churches have been disgraced of

late by the erection of great unsightly boxes, in which those who despise social worship contrive to hide themselves from their fellow-worshippers: but I never expected to see such a thing in this place.* And I declare, that be the consequences what they may to myself personally, you shall never erect a pew in this church while I can throw an obstacle in your way."

"And I on the other hand declare, that before you are an hour older, my pew shall be in progress. Here, Tristram, — Tristram Sugge, — bring in your tools, man, and set to work. The Malignants have

* An inclosed seat (and sometimes a stall and desk, within the chancel) was generally provided for the patron of the church, and this mark of distinction (says Britton, Dictionary of Architecture, p. 356) is noticed in documents as old as 1240: but until the time of the Reformation the worshippers stood or knelt upon the floor. Fixed benches appear to have been seldom used before that period, though stools were in use. The "pues" which are spoken of soon after that epoch, seem to have been what we now call "open sittings," *i. e.*, benches with backs, but without doors. The writer has never seen "a pew," in the modern acceptation of the term, of earlier date than the seventeenth century. They increased in number with the increase of Puritanism, were made high and easy for the slumbering times of William III, and have reached the summit of their glory in *our* day; only, it is to be hoped

"Ut lapsu graviore ruant."

All Churchmen must feel grateful to Archdeacon Hare for that part of his recent charge in which he grapples with this subject.

had it all their own way long enough,—let us see if we can't mend matters. Hark ye, sirrah,—you Degge, go look if Sugge is in the church-yard, and bid him come here directly."

The clerk went out, and in a minute returned: "Yes, Tristram was on the outside of the porch,—but he would not come in till he had spoken a word to Master Blote about his scruples."

"Fool!" exclaimed the angry Puritan, and paced down the aisle, closely followed by Mr. Dolben, who continued to expostulate with his ill-conditioned parishioner. And thus they reached the church-door; but no sooner had they crossed the threshold, than Obadiah Degge, who remained within, flung to the door behind them,—locked it, double locked it,—and running across the church to a door on the opposite side, opened it, and locking it after him, made his escape almost before Mr. Blote and the Rector suspected what had been done.

CHAPTER II.

Conscientious Reformers.

Whate'er the Popish hands have built
Our hammers shall undo;
We'll break their pipes, and burn their copes,
And pull down churches too.
Lawn sleeves and rochets shall go down,
And hey then up go we;
The leathern cap shall brave the throne,
Then hey, boys, up go we!
The Puritan's Garland. (1640.)

That the noisiest advocates of that one-sided license miscalled Civil and Religious Liberty, are the greatest domestic tyrants, and that whenever in authority themselves, they are wont to trample most mercilessly and unscrupulously upon all who differ from them in opinion, are facts of such general observation as to have become proverbial; and which, as they have been abundantly exemplified at other

times, so were they the distinguishing characteristics of the epoch of which we are writing. No sooner did the Puritanical faction find itself triumphant, than amid much other horrible wickedness, it commenced a course of persecution against those who had resisted it, which was hardly inferior (though, as it happened, more bloodless) to that by which Queen Mary endeavoured to check the progress of the Reformation. There are occasions on which it is a harder trial to be a Confessor than a Martyr: a man can die but once; but he who for conscience sake is compelled to involve a wife and children in his own ruin, and to see them starving before his eyes undergoes an hundred deaths; and this was the trial, which, as being the cruelest, the Puritans loved to inflict on those who continued faithful to the Church and King: the martyrs were few; confessors were innumerable.

Of course when such a man as Mr. Blote became his active personal enemy, Mr. Dolben knew that he must make up his mind for the worst; and he was not long kept in suspense. So irritated was the churlish squire at the refusal he had experienced on the subject

of the pew, and so indignant at the insult inflicted on him by Obadiah Degge, at the instigation (as he nothing doubted) of the Rector, that before he laid down his head upon his pillow that night he had drawn up a petition to the parliament, representing Mr. Dolben as a teacher of erroneous, Popish, and scandalous doctrines; which petition, being signed by himself and his footboy, was duly transmitted to Mr. Pym, and thereupon, within a fortnight after the events recorded in the last chapter, a pursuivant was sent down to Milford to apprehend its unfortunate Rector, who was forthwith torn from his family, and having been placed at the bar of the House of Commons, was, after a few irrelevant questions asked, sent on board ship (for the prisons were now full) with the prospect of being speedily transported (without further trial) to the plantations, or sent to Algiers, there to be sold as a slave to the Turks:—for, incredible as it may seem, such are said to have been the tender mercies of the Puritans to their fellow-Christians,—such the justice which the advocates of liberal opinions (as we call them now-a-days), and friends of liberty, dispensed to their fellow-subjects.

On the afternoon of the day in which Mr. Dolben was taken into custody, Mr. Mumgrizzle left his lodgings upon a summons from his patron, and proceeded with all convenient speed to Milford Grange. Why had Mr. Blote sent for him? Was there any hope that he might be called upon to occupy the Rector's deserted pulpit? was there a chance of his being put in possession of the old rectory, with its fruitful garden, and three hundred acres of glebe? Mr. Blote was a person of increasing influence; such things had been done elsewhere, why might they not be done at Milford? Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle was an ambitious man, but his vanity was even greater than his ambition, and so he was beginning to persuade himself not only that such things were possible, but that no better appointment could be made, when he became sensible that he had been overtaken by a fellow-traveller, and on looking up, recognized a person for whom he had as great a veneration as he had for Mr. Blote himself; this was no other than the Reverend Faithful Thunderplump,—a gentleman who was a sort of Pope among the Puritans of the midland counties.

It will be in the reader's recollection, that about ten or fifteen years before the events which we are recording took place, one Dr. Preston, (a person who had then the chief influence with the Puritans) devised a plan for promoting the interests of his party, which, under a very plausible pretence, was as crafty a scheme for the overthrow of the Church-government as could be imagined. A Society was formed for the purchase of impropriations, an object to all appearance, not only unobjectionable, but praise-worthy; but which had for its real purpose the getting as many livings as possible into the hands of twelve leading Puritans, who would, of course, nominate to the respective incumbencies persons of their own views only; and exercise an authority far more absolute than that of all the Prelates put together. This plan, (which has, alas, been revived in our day, if not with the same object, at least with the same tendencies,) was overthrown by the vigilance of Laud (then Bishop of London), but not until the several members of the Committee had become dangerous from their influence, and the scheme itself had been the source of much evil, by placing a

large portion of the clergy under a self-constituted body, in a state of entire dependence; by alienating the inhabitants of large towns from the Church; and by infusing, or at least endeavouring to infuse, by simoniacal means, the leaven of Puritanism through the entire mass of the people. Among these persons was the Reverend Faithful Thunderplump, who had been selected by Dr. Preston as one of his coadjutors on the ground of his deep hatred of prelacy, and his bustling temper, or, as the Doctor pithily worded it, because he "was a good crow to smell carrion." On the failure of the impropriation scheme, Thunderplump became one of the most active members of the Puritan faction, and at the period of which we are writing was member of the Committee "for the purging of the ministry;" in other words, for bringing false and scandalous charges against the regular Clergy, and thereupon ejecting them from their livings; a Committee already of iniquisitorial power, though it was not till ten years afterwards (1653) that this system arrived at its height, and those "Tryers" were appointed, who dividing the country into six circuits, set themselves to the task

of sequestering and ejecting the Clergy, and permitted none to be instituted in their place, until they had been "tried, judged, and approved" by them; thus closely resembling the clerical committee of a popular Society in our own days, and exercising like them a "Hyper-archiepiscopal, and Super-metropolitan"* authority.

Nor was Mr. Thunderplump at all ill calculated for the position in which he was placed. He was a very complete villain, with very little villainy in his smooth, sleek, countenance. He had, indeed, a sinister expression of sly cunning which was sufficiently apparent to those who watched him; but, so far as features were concerned, he was very well looking, and even the Puritanical dress could not conceal the fact that he was an exceeding well-made man.

A shrewd old lady of our acquaintance has assured us upon the observation of three-score years, that nobody, male or female, has so much love made to them as a popular preacher; certainly Mr. Thunderplump was a case in point. Wherever he

* Walker, p. 171.

appeared he was all but worshipped by the ladies, who feasted him, followed, and flirted with him in Scripture phrases, hung upon his smooth words with rapture, and sat by the hour to hear his extemporaneous "lectures" and "exercises."

Such was the person, who mounted upon his stately black horse, saluted Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle in the following manner: "Pardon me, my good friend, for thus intruding on you while your mind is so occupied with things spiritual. Nay, Master Mumgrizzle, do not apologize; I know it was so. Ah, good man, good man, you are a burning light in these dark places. Whither are you going?"

"I am on my way to Milford Grange."

"We are companions in travel then," rejoined Mr. Thunderplump, "and with your leave I will share your meditations; so shall we edify one another as we go along." So saying, he dismounted from his steed, and throwing the bridle over his arm, placed himself at Mumgrizzle's side. "And what was the passage that occupied your thoughts, brother? Did you find it sweet and consolatory to yourself, are you about to expound it faithfully to others?"

"I was not thinking of Scripture at all, Master Thunderplump," answered Mahalaleel in some confusion, "I was just wondering in myself whether that dumb dog, Parson Dolben, will be ejected from this living."

"Ah, good man, good man, truly your heart is full of the milk of human kindness. I see you can pity and pray for even such a popish Judas, such a prelatical vessel of wrath as that. But were these all your thoughts, brother?" asked Thunderplump with a searching gaze at his companion.

The blood rose in Mumgrizzle's yellow cheek while he answered, "Yea, I was meditating further on the poor people at Milford. Will they be left without a shepherd? Will no one go down to yonder steeple-house and teach them?"

"Ah, good man, good man, such a reflection was worthy of you: and was *this* your only thought?"

"No, brother, I felt myself moved to undertake the charge myself."

"Good man, good man, take heed that you do not exhaust your strength: you must husband your precious zeal. And these were your *only* thoughts?"

repeated Mr. Thunderplump once more, with a sly demure look out of the corners of his eyes.

"Nay, brother, since you press me, I must honestly confess that my thought was that, under such circumstances, the labourer would be worthy of his hire, and that...."

"Aye, aye, your notion was as natural as it was benevolent; when you are the patient, prayerful minister of Milford, it is but meet that you should have yonder rectory as they call it, for your tabernacle. Lo you there! I have read all your thoughts without your telling them to me. Brother, brother, you are a good man, but too simple-minded; your features were given you to enable you to hide the thoughts of your heart, not to betray them. Take my advice, and never look anybody in the face, never let any man's eyes rest on your's till you have learned the secret of concealing, by an impenetrable expression, all that you wish to conceal. We, the elect, have a great work before us; the saints must reign on earth, as well as in heaven, but our triumph is not yet complete, and we must needs be prudent as serpents." Then suddenly changing his tone, and giving one

more of his searching looks, Mr. Thunderplump proceeded, "Pray, have you taken any steps to secure the heritage of this son of Belial, Dolben? such things are not like to go a begging."

"No, indeed, Master Thunderplump, I have not, but I suppose my worthy patron Blote is like to have the appointment, and if I dared I would fain ask him."

"And why dare you not?

"Alas! for a spiritual-minded man, he is one of uncertain temper: it is hard to say beforehand how he might take the application; he might grant it at once, or he might make it the excuse for quarrelling with me for ever."

"Then if Master Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle knows this, why does he not get some friend to apply in his behalf, and thus shield himself in case of offence being taken."

"It will indeed be the best way. Will *you* make the petition for me."

"Dolt!" muttered Mr. Thunderplump to himself; and then answered audibly, "Nay, brother, it will suit me as ill as you to quarrel with Mr. Blote;

you must choose another agent. In all these kind of cases my plan is *to plough with the heifer*."

"I do not understand you, brother."

"In plain words, then, set his *wife* to talk him over. Women know their times and opportunities, and have a strange unaccountable influence over men; they are the best tools in the world if you know how to manage them."

"But how are they to be managed?"

"Find out their weak point and indulge it," answered worthy Mr. Thunderplump. "Don't you know Mrs. Blote's weak point? Does not she love drink, as much as he loves money?"

"I fear me it is so, but I cannot drink with her, indeed I cannot.

"Nay, Mumgrizzle, it is not required of you; she drinks like a fish, but drinks in private: wherefore my advice to you is to send her certain bottles of the finest stomachic cordial you can procure,—(Maraschino the profane would recommend), and then the next time you meet her, let fall the intimation that if you should be so fortunate as to succeed Mr. Dolben, you would be ready to let the glebe at half its value to

her husband, (you would still have an ample income,) and to resign your present salary.—Now see if that scheme would not work well!.. Nay, wherefore do you hesitate?" continued the adviser to his friend.

"Would not this savour of the sin of Simony?" asked Mumgrizzle doubtfully.

"Go to, for a simple witted fellow," was the reply; "I thought you had known your position and duties better than to give way to such weak scruples. See you not, that what would be Simony in others is not so to those whose object is to advance the Gospel? The end sanctifies the means."

With this choice suggestion on his lips, Mr. Thunderplump and his companion arrived before the door at Milford Grange, and were speedily admitted into the presence of the Squire.

Mr. Blote was seated in his easy chair, with a book in his hand and a jug of ale by his side, both of which he seemed to be enjoying with great satisfaction, for, on the entrance of his visitors, he waved his hand, as though he craved a short pause in order that he might finish the matters in which he was engaged, without interruption. After the delay of a

minute or two the book was shut and the liquor drunk, and then Mr. Blote bade his guests welcome, in a manner which he intended should betoken that the act was one of great condescension on his part. Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle shewed his sense of what he really felt to be an honour, by servile fawning and exaggerated expressions: Mr. Thunderplump, on the other hand, full of his own importance, was nettled, and his vanity wounded at the coolness of his reception. "I presume," said he, "there is some mistake; you have hardly sent for me post-haste, in order that I may be rewarded at the end of my journey by seeing you top off a can of ale, Master Blote; have I misunderstood your message, or come at a wrong hour."

"Neither, my worthy brother, I assure you; but I was reading this searching book with such unction that I could not lay it down."

"And what is your book, Sir?" asked the Preacher, rather doggedly.

"Oh, that blessed work, 'Zion's plea against the Prelates.' Oh, Alexander Leighton! Alexander Leighton! thou hast hit the right nail upon the head,

—thou hast come to the root! How touchingly dost thou exhort the saints to smite the Bishops under the fifth rib and slay them: how truly dost thou designate the Man's wife, the woman whom they call Queen, an idolatress, a Canaanite, a daughter of Heth!"

"Verily, he delivered his testimony faithfully," answered Mr. Thunderplump, "and suffered wrongfully from the Philistine oppressors; but the good man hath his reward."

"How so?" asked the Squire.

"Have you not heard, then, that he whom the Prelates cast into a dungeon, is himself become the prison-keeper? that Lambeth palace is become Lambeth jail, and that he is the jailor thereof?"

"No," replied Mr. Blote; "but I heard another matter that was well worth the hearing. Master Mumgrizzle, they kept May-day better in the Parliament-house than we did here in Milford: *we* let the Malignants get the upper hand of us shamefully on that day; aye, Master Mumgrizzle, and at the very time when I was being locked out of yonder church, was that pious man, Hugh Peters, bringing forward his motion that William Laud should, without further

trial or hearing, be transported to New England. I fear me some wavering professors, who do the work negligently, have made some opposition to the plan, and he may escape for a while; but it was a noble suggestion, and worthy to be imitated;——*here or elsewhere*," added the Squire, in an under tone, and as if he was rather thinking aloud than actually speaking; but the remark was not lost upon Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle, who immediately groaned forth, "Well-a-day, my honoured patron, you do but remind us of sad truths, for if Canterbury has its William Laud, Milford Malvoisin hath its Bernard Dolben."

"*Had* you should rather say than 'hath.' I know by a sure hand that it will be many a day before that scandalous and unhappy delinquent will be let out of the safe keeping in which he is now held. We have rid the country of him; but, my good and tried friends," continued the Squire, "the work is but half done, and I would have your aid in carrying it on further. What boots it that Baal's priest is removed, if the temple of Baal is still filled with idolatry and superstition? Should we not make an end thereof, brother Thunderplump? Ought we

not to purge and make clean, Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle?"

"Yea verily," answered the Preachers with one consent.

"Dear Christian friends," continued Mr. Blote waxing warm with his subject, and laying aside for awhile the haughtiness of his manner, in order to secure his present object the better,—"Dear Christian friends, it is no small satisfaction to me to have the support of your wisdom and experience. I believe you are both aware of the sore trial to which I was exposed no long while since, on a day when circumstances led me down to the Church. Oh! the mummeries! Oh! the superstition of that place! Verily, if the Liturgy—(lethargy would be a better name!) be an unpurged mass-book; the churches are yet in these parts but unpurged mass-houses. So I felt on that unhappy occasion; and thereupon my spirit burned within me to effect a pious reformation which I would now carry through in your presence. We have all heard of those heavenly-minded men in the seven associated counties,* who have been

* Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridge, Essex, Lincoln, Herts, & Huntingdon.

labouring with the Earl of Manchester, to root out the marks of the beast; how they have thrown down images, and defaced pictures, and destroyed the crosses, and copes, and railings, and organs, and such like abominations."

"Yea, doubtless," answered Mr. Mumgrizzle, "their praises are sounded forth in every congregation."

"Painful labourers are they all, and I fear are but ill requited; my kinsman, William Dowsing, got but six and eight-pence for breaking with his own hands the sun and moon, and two hundred more of the thousand superstitious pictures which were destroyed at Clare in Suffolk."*

"Well-a-day," groaned forth Mahalaleel with upturned hands and eyes, "but we live in a thankless generation."

"True, my worthy friend," replied Mr. Blote, "but we must return good for evil; and so through my kinsman's good offices I have obtained a warrant to remove all scandals and superstitions from Milford church; thither I trust you will go with me,

* See Dowsing's Journal, p. 11.

and we will begin and make an end together. I have already, in expectation of your arrival, sent down to the clerk (a malignant like his master) to be ready with the keys; and Tristram Sugge, and some other godly professors, Diggory Brix, the mason, Kit Cummin, my serving-man, Roger Newte, and Phineas Frogspawn, are at hand to accompany us."

It is needless to say that such a proposal was received with delight; and that these zealous, single-hearted men, were forthwith wending their way to the church at Milford Malvoisin.

CHAPTER III.

Reform in progress.

Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun;
Decide all controversies by
Infallible artillery;
And prove their doctrine orthodox
By apostolic blows and knocks;
Call fire, and sword, and devastation
A thorough-going reformation,
Which always must be carried on,
And still be doing, never done:
As if religion were intended
For nothing else but to be mended.

Hudibras.

To what degree the spoliation of our churches might have been carried if Divine Providence had not mercifully interposed, and by cutting short the life of King Edward VI., put a sudden stop to the nefarious designs of his unprincipled and rapacious attendants,

it is hard to say; but tremendous as was the amount of sacrilege committed during his short reign, and the closing years of his father's life, it was less than that for which the Puritans are responsible. Paradoxical as such an assertion may seem, the accession and reign of Queen Mary (bloody as her Spanish advisers rendered it) were great and positive advantages to the Church of England,—inasmuch as they checked the growth of that foreign influence which had begun to introduce all manner of evil among us; which, in 1552, had actually effected material alterations in the Liturgy, and which was evidently bent upon establishing our whole ecclesiastical polity upon the Geneva model. During the long reigns of Elizabeth and James there was time for sounder Church principles to gain ground; and but, perhaps, for the elevation of Abbot to the Primacy, the followers of Calvin would never have obtained their bad pre-eminence among us. Eventually, indeed, as we know too well, and feel, alas! to the present hour, they *did* get the upper hand; and in the murder of their anointed Sovereign, and the temporary overthrow of the altar and the throne, we have a sample of the ex-

tent of evil which they might have accomplished, if at an earlier period Providence had permitted them to domineer over the Church. But the Reformation in this country was not sullied by their crimes. Great and grievous sacrilege there was; but there is some comfort in the thought that "the mutilations to which our churches have been visibly subjected, were not the work of the Reformers (which would give them a certain authority in the eyes of Protestants), but are to be referred to the Rebellion in the next century, a political and ecclesiastical catastrophe which went far indeed beyond the wishes and intentions of the Reformers."

As soon as the pious conclave whom we left at Milford Grange had entered the church-yard, Mr. Blote looked round him in evident expectation of seeing Obadiah Degge, and no doubt was experiencing very considerable satisfaction from the thought that he could now pay back with interest the insult which had been put upon him. But Obadiah was not to be seen; the only person present besides themselves was a little urchin of a boy, who was enjoying a solitary game at leap-frog over the backs of

the tomb-stones, and who, after giving one glance at the band of destructives, turned three times head over heels, and then re-commenced his pastime. By this time Tristram Sugge had run forward and tried the several doors of the church, but they were all locked.

"Boy!" cried Mr. Blote, beckoning towards the tomb-stones: but the boy came not; he began walking indeed, but it was upon his head, and in a different direction.

"Sirrah! you boy, why don't you come when the Squire calls you?" was now shouted by half-a-dozen voices at once.

The active youth was evidently alarmed at the hubbub; and, after a succession of rapid summersets, lit upon his legs, and came up to the party grinning, with cap in hand. He was a thin, stunted lad, with lank sandy hair, features not unlike those of a skinned rabit, and his face freckled into all imaginary shades of yellow and brown; it need hardly be said, therefore, that he was very ugly,—but his bright, sharp eye beamed with intelligence,—at least, when it suited him to be intelligent; and there was an expression of cunning, mingled with an apparent love

of mischief,—which, altogether, suggested the idea that he was one with whom it was desirable to keep on good terms. He approached those who called him in the manner we have described, but when he had arrived within five or six yards of them he stopped short, as if not choosing to put himself within arms length of them.

"How now, Sir?" cried Mr. Blote, "why did'nt you come when I called."

"Did'nt know as you called *me*, Sir."

"Why, is there any other boy in the churchyard?"

"Never another young 'un, Sir, as I knows on; but I thought perhaps you meant the *old* boy."

"Old boy? what do you mean?"

"Oh, I've often heard Roger Newte call Master Mumgrizzle an old boy, have'nt I, Roger? so how could I tell?"

Roger Newte who was standing behind Mr. Mumgrizzle, shook his fist at the urchin; and then proceeded to tell the Squire that there was not such a lying mischievous little varlet in the parish; and that he was Obadiah Degge's nephew.

"Ah, no doubt he takes after his uncle," cried Mr. Blote, "but we must teach him better manners. Hark ye, Sir, what is your name?"

"Riggle, please your worship, Eli Riggle; but my grandam calls me the wriggling eel."

"Now, then, if you do'nt answer my question properly, I'll give you something that shall make you wriggle more than you like my lad. Where's your uncle?"

"Please, Sir, I believe you're a treading on him."

"Not that uncle, blockhead; we all know Peter Riggle is dead and buried; the Squire wants to know where Obadiah Degge is," said the carpenter.

"Oh! he's gone to the wars," answered the boy.

"Gone to the wars!" cried the Squire in a tone of disappointment, "why I told him to meet me with the key of the church."

"He bade me come down here, Sir, and wait for you, and tell you he was very sorry he could'nt attend your honour's pleasure, but he had a pressing invitation to go and shoot Roundheads."

Something very like an oath burst from the Squire's lips. "And has your precious uncle, you young cockatrice, not sent down the keys of the church?"

"No, please your honour's worship; for he said I had better find out first whether you would have them now, or wait till you get them;"—and the boy grinned from ear to ear.

Mr. Blote sprang forward with the intention of seizing the saucy monkey and giving him a good beating, but Eli Riggle kept his sharp eyes in full occupation, and the moment he saw the bulky Squire's first movement, he turned round, jumped over half a dozen grave-stones in succession, bounded over the low churchyard wall in an instant, and set off at full speed across the fields, shouting as he went the words of a popular ditty. Mr. Blote had no inclination for a race; and though he seemed disposed to allow one or two of his satellites to commence a pursuit, he speedily changed his mind, and directed them to force open the locked door. This being effected without much difficulty, the whole body rushed into the church tumultuously.

"How now?" exclaimed the Squire, as he perceived that one or two of those who accompanied him, had instinctively taken off their hats; "How now, Phineas Frogspawn! How now, Roger Newte! are you going to turn prelatists? What! would you doff your beavers as if this den of superstition, were holy ground?" The abashed rustics immediately replaced their hats.

"Dear brethren," said Mr. Thunderplump, "in the painful duty which has devolved on us, I am sure your hearts' desire is that it should be carried through so effectually, as that we should leave no room for those that come after us to say that we did the work negligently. We will make our reforms in this church a pattern to the whole neighbourhood. Wherefore that nothing should through forgetfulness or over haste be omitted, lo, our worthy Squire and I will take our places here where you can see us, and we will give our directions from hence." With that Mr. Thunderplump sat himself down upon the altar, and beckoned to Mr. Blote to do the same.

"Now, first," observed the Preacher, "let us

get a little day-light, in order that we may see what we are about. The sunshine has been too long kept out, and the whole place darkened with all these superstitious paintings. Take up yonder Prayer-book, Diggory, it seems a heavy one, and see if you can't send it into the churchyard."

In an instant there was a loud crash, and the glass of a beautiful painted window, shivered into a thousand pieces, fell rattling on the floor.

"Very well, for a beginning, Diggory," said Mr. Thunderplump with a calm smile, "only methinks you are too vigorous, considering you have a heavy work before you; it is mere waste of strength to make an onslaught like that. Try again more gently.... Ah! that was better,"—(as another light was dashed to pieces). "Once more; well-a-day, what a blessed thing it is to see the sunshine; don't you think so, brother Mumgrizzle?"

Brother Mumgrizzle rubbed his hands, and almost screamed with delight.

"I don't think you need further instructions, Diggory; there are twelve windows of three lights each; don't hurt yourself, don't let your spirits run

away with you. Give me a hammer, Tristram Sugge; I feel warming to the work, and will supply you with stone, to smash the upper lights withal. Dear, dear! I was not aware that alabaster was so soft!" continued Mr. Mumgrizzle, as he knocked off the head of an angel, which adorned the Founder's altar tomb, with a blow of his hammer, and then proceeded to destroy every piece of carving within his reach in like manner.

Meanwhile, the glorious series of painted windows which (as usual in those days) filled the whole church, and which portrayed the principal events of the life of our blessed Saviour, were broken so effectually, that at the end of half an hour not a single figure was left unmutilated with the exception of that of the Devil in the Temptation, which was saved at Roger Newte's suggestion, because, as he said, though the Parliament had given orders to break down saints, there was no order to break down the devil;* whereat one or two that stood by, and knew the character of the man, whispered to one another

* This is a fact, and the place where it occurred was Canterbury Cathedral. See Walker, p. 25.

that it was plain enough who was Newte's saint. It was during the destruction of this last window, and after two or three heavy stones had been thrown through the shattered quarries into the churchyard, that to the alarm of the spoilers a flight of stones found their way back again into the church, and the largest of them lighted with considerable force on Mr. Mumgrizzle's nose, who fell to the ground with a dismal howl, and declared to his terror stricken companions that he had seen a grinning face of fiendish expression peering through the broken glass, and had no doubt that it was the Adversary of mankind himself. It was some time before any of his companions summoned courage to run into the churchyard, and when they did, it was of course empty. Luckily Messrs. Blote and Thunderplump were at the other extremity of the church, or perhaps they would have recognized the features of Eli Riggle, and thereby destroyed (what the Puritans loved so much) a well-authenticated tale of visible Satanic agency.

We will not weary and disgust our readers with any lengthened or circumstantial detail of the fur-

ther progress of these pious reformers. The scenes enacted in the church of Milford Malvoisin were in those times an every-day sight; and from the lofty Cathedral down to the humblest and poorest House of God in the land, there is scarcely a sacred edifice of those existing at that period, which does not still bear upon it the marks of the Puritan oppressors' "ruthless sway." If the country had been exposed to foreign invasion, and to all the license and plunder of a triumphant enemy, she could not have had harder measure than she experienced at the hands of her own children. Every church and consecrated building wore the appearance of having undergone a siege, and been sacked; and that "Storm-beeldery," (as the Flemings, among whom it began at Ypres, happily designated the iconoclasm of the sixteenth century) which marked the temporary downfall of the Church of England, would have shown unequivocally the real spirit of the Parliamentarian faction, even if history had preserved no other records of its tyranny, its hypocrisy, and its bold defiance of God. Yet indelible as are the memorials of that miserable time, irreparable as are many of the evils

then inflicted on us, we may yet turn them into blessings if only we receive them as pregnant warnings; nay, the very mutilation of our churches may preach more eloquently to us, and be a more heart-stirring homily, and witness, against the errors of the present day, than could have fallen from the lips of any uninspired teacher. As we look upon the ruin and desolation to which the Houses of God were exposed, we may reflect upon the rise, the progress, and the *end* of rebellion; we may see to what desperate lengths men,—(many, no doubt, of laudable intentions) may be drawn by faction; and we may understand with what true wisdom that petition is inserted in the Litany, wherein we pray the Lord to deliver us from all sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion; from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart, and contempt of His Word and Commandment; from all those sins, in short, "which draw after them, in certain and inevitable consequence, the heaviest of all chastisements upon a guilty nation."*

The progress of spoliation in Milford Church was,

* Quarterly Review, Vol. 25, p. 346.

as we have said, identical in kind with that which took place elsewhere. In the eyes of the Puritans, whatever was ancient was popish, and whatever was popish was idolatrous. Those blind leaders of the blind either could not, or would not see any distinction between what had the sanction of apostolical antiquity, and what had been introduced by the Romanists of yesterday. They could not comprehend that *some* Roman usages might yet be Catholic and Scriptural; they had no fear of rooting up the wheat, while eradicating what they were pleased to consider the tares in the field of the Church. In their malice or their ignorance, it was the same to them *what* they destroyed, provided only, that they could be guilty of some sacrilegious act. Whether the windows which they fractured were filled with scriptural illustrations, or obscure legends from the breviary,—whether the sculptured stone portrayed the instruments of the Passion, or exhibited in bas-relief the sufferings of souls in purgatory,—whether the name that adorned the pannels of the roof was that of the Virgin-Mother, or her ever-blessed Son, all was one to them, it was equally popish, and destined to indiscriminate destruction.

And thus it fared at Milford; some broke down the emblems of the Holy Trinity, and defaced the Cross wherever they could find it. Some tore up the monumental brasses, others battered and mutilated the tabernacle work of the altar-tomb. The texts of scripture which were emblazoned on the walls,

"——the scrolls that teach to live and die,"

were obliterated with mud and filth, the rood screen, and parcloses which separated the chantry from the chancel, with all their dainty carved work and pannelling; the altar rails, and the sedilia within the sacred inclosure, were in turn subjected to the axes and hammers of the frantic destroyers: the altar was dragged from the east end, and set in the middle of the church: the font was broken off its pedestal, and sent by the Squire to his kennel to hold water for his dogs; while the canopy over the font, "with a pelican on the top, picking its breast, all gilt over with gold," like that at Ufford, which William Dowsing of eternal infamy took such pleasure in destroying, was dragged out of the church, and together with fragments of the broken organ,—the surplices, and an ancient cope which was still used on the high festi-

vals, (the sight of which 'rag of popery,' coming suddenly upon his broken nose, threw Mr. Mumgrizzle into a dead faint) was speedily converted into a heap of glowing ashes.

Meanwhile, the Squire and Mr. Thunderplump, who had suggested and encouraged each separate act of sacrilege, found themselves half choked with the dust which had been raised, and feeling rather thirsty with their exertions, proceeded to the ambry, or cupboard in which the sacramental wine was kept, for the purpose of refreshing themselves therewith. To their disappointment, however, the ambry was empty, and they were about to leave the church, when Mr. Blote exclaimed that he had nearly forgotten one of the points which required most serious correction. "Oh, brother," said he, "you know not what papistical vessels of gold and silver were wont to be displayed on yonder table at communion: candlesticks and dishes, cups and platters, covered with graven images, and deadly superstitions!"

"Surely," answered Mr. Thunderplump, with one of his meekest looks, and most dolorous sighs, "it behoves us as Christian men, to consign them to

the crucible and melting pot. Let them be sold, and the proceeds given to the poor. Why should there be such waste of gold and silver? Better a pewter cup and dish, and a leather or wicker bottle, or even a tavern wine pot,* by way of flagon, than any of such popish vessels as you describe."

With part of this suggestion Mr. Blote was well pleased; he was quite ready to see pewter substituted for the more precious metals, but he was by no means anxious to have recourse to the crucible, for to say truth, he had fully resolved to appropriate to his own use a beautiful pair of silver gilt candlesticks which, in obedience to the rubric, were always placed upon the altar; so he met the question by saying, "Ah, my worthy friend, you are always ready with a pious suggestion; and certainly, if there were no other call for it elsewhere, the surplus when these things are sold, might be given to the poor; but this day's work will put the parish to some expense; windows must be repaired and so forth; I think *I* had better take charge of the plate, and dispose of it for these and such like purposes.'

* See Bp. Montagu's Articles of Inquiry 1638, p. 51

"A better plan could not be devised," answered the Preacher, "let us see the vessels forthwith. Where be they?"

"They are kept in an iron chest in the vestry;" replied Mr. Blote, "it will be well if that rascal, Obadiah Degge, has left the keys behind him."

To the vestry they immediately proceeded, but the chest was no longer in its wonted place; and that it had recently been moved, was evident, for there was a mark where it had been dragged along the floor, which, from its appearance, could not have been made many days. After searching about in vain for some time, the two reformers bethought them of following up the track, and were led to a door in the tower which was locked.

Tristram Sugge, the carpenter, was now called up, and after a good deal of trouble the door was forced open. The interior was very dark, but a light being procured, one angle of the iron chest was discovered peeping out from under a load of lumber which had been heaped over it.

"See the cunning of these Malignants!" exclaimed the Squire, as a glimmering of the truth

flashed into his mind; "I now remember telling Obadiah Degge, the last time I was here, to have these things ready for my inspection, and this is the trick the scoundrel has played me."

"Aye, aye, he thought he had hid them where no eye could find them," cried Mr. Thunderplump; "but we will soon shew him his error. Here, my friends, bear a hand and haul out this chest for us."

The rest of the party, who had now once more re-entered the church came forward to assist, and in process of time, and after sore complaints of its weight, the chest was brought into the light of day.

It was an iron box fastened with three locks, and supplied with every contrivance that could make it a work of labour and difficulty to break it open; for it is hardly necessary to say that our friend Obadiah had not left his keys behind him.

Mr. Blote looked rather blank on inspecting it, but desired Tristram Sugge to fetch his tools, and force the locks.

But Tristram shook his head. He was "willing to try, if his honour's worship desired it, but he knew

he should only break his tools. They had better send for Sampson Hornyhold the blacksmith, and it was like to be a day's work for him."

The blacksmith was sent for accordingly; but was at first so utterly amazed at the havock which had been made in the church, that it was a long while before he could recover his senses sufficiently to express his opinion that it would be "a mortal tough job, and that he hardly knew how to set about it."

However, when he had scratched his head a little more, and grinned at the broken windows, he set off to his shop, and in due time returned with a supply of iron crowbars, and sledge hammers, and, (which the Squire could have dispensed with, as he wished to finish his evil work without interruption) with half the parish at his heels.

Loud and bitter were the complaints of the honest folks when they saw the desolation of their church; but they were awed by the Squire's presence, and the sight of the warrant, and stood by in sullen silence, while the blacksmith laboured away at the iron chest. Blow fell upon blow, and one tool after

another was bent or broken, but little or no impression was made upon the lid. At length, at the end of two hours of hard labour, one of the hinges gave way. Every eye was then turned towards the chest. "It will soon come now," cried the blacksmith.

"It is time it should," replied Mr. Blote, approaching the box. And accordingly, after a little more wrenching, and a few more blows, off came the lid, and discovered an interior,—not full of gold and silver sacramental plate, but containing only a mask, a halter, and some large stones, which had evidently been there placed to make the chest more weighty. This was all the treasure which revealed itself to Mr. Blote's longing eyes, and lest he should be in any doubt why such articles were placed there, the following doggrel had been chalked on the interior of the lid :—

"A HYPOCRITE'S MASK, AND A HANGMAN'S CORD,
FOR WEARING THE FIRST, BE THE LAST YOUR REWARD!"

It is impossible to describe the rage, shame, and vexation of Mr. Blote as he perused this complimentary couplet, and heard the shout of laughter which was raised by his fellow-parishioners. For a moment

he stood pale and trembling, with quivering lips and down-cast eyes, and then casting a look of hatred and contempt on the jeering crowd, he seized Mr. Thunderplump's arm, and followed by his servants dashed out of the church. And it was well for him, perhaps, he did so; for popular indignation was so extreme against him, and the satisfaction so great at Obadiah Degge's successful trick, that had the Squire stayed much longer he might have been thrown into his own horse-pond.

As it was, he hurried home, cursing his own stupidity for having been led step by step into the trap which the shrewd clerk had prepared for him. But Obadiah Degge was now far from Milford, and out of the wrathful Squire's reach; so Mr. Blote was left to digest his anger as best he could; and this was no easy matter. In vain Mr. Thunderplump endeavoured to console him, in vain he recommended him to rest in his easy chair, and to disport himself by reading worthy Mr. Sibbs' "Seven sobs of a sorrowful soul;" "the which," he added, "will greatly alleviate the perturbation of your honour's worshipful spirit." Mr. Blote paced up

and down the room, vowing vengeance on every man, woman, and child in Milford; and it was only when Mr. Thunderplump suggested that such seeming distress of mind would afford an excuse to the enemy for saying that Mr. Blote was conscience-struck, that the Squire began to control himself. He then gradually assumed great dignity of manner, and after speaking with deep satisfaction of his having been the humble instrument for the reformation of the parish church, and for the rooting out of superstition; "I have now good hope," said he, "that we shall have painful gospel-preaching Ministers, and a place of worship no longer contaminated with popery;—yea, a place in which I can appear without scruple; and therefore Tristram Sugge, do you go down to the church immediately, and with the wainscoating which we have pulled down to-day, do you erect a goodly PEW, meet for a person in my station, wherein I can sit at mine ease, and judge of the doctrines of the preacher, without being crowded upon or discommoded by the common wretches who used to crawl to hear old Dolben."

Under such circumstances a structure was erected

whose history, for the next two hundred years, we now propose to set before our readers, with greater or less minuteness, as circumstances seem to require.

CHAPTER IV.

The Dormitory.

"The reverend pile lay wild and waste,
Profaned, dishonour'd, and defaced.
Through storied lattices no more
In soften'd light the sunbeams pour,
Gilding the Gothic sculpture rich
Of shrine, and monument, and niche.
The Civil fury of the time
Made sport of sacrilegious crime;
For dark Fanaticism rent
Altar, and screen, and ornament."

Walter Scott.

As soon as Mr. Blote was recovered from the fatigues of his "thorough-going reformation" in Milford Church, he began to think seriously of purifying the Parsonage, for although Mr. Dolben had been thrown into confinement, his wife and little ones were still permitted to continue in their old

home without molestation. Such an act of mercy, however, being wholly at variance with the usual practice of the Puritans, it may perhaps be fairly presumed that Mrs. Dolben's continuance at Milford Rectory was rather the result of an accidental oversight, than of any spark of pity being found in the bosoms of her husband's enemies. However, she was not left long in peace, for when pious Mr. Mumgrizzle in obedience to Mr. Thunderplump's suggestions, had hinted to the Squire that in his opinion no man would be worthy of the charge of that parish, who was not prepared,—in humble acknowledgment of what Mr. Blote had done for the cause of true religion,—to offer the glebe to that gentleman at half or one third of its yearly value; the disinterested reformer was so taken with the notion, that acting, as he always did, upon the purest motives, he intimated his entire conviction that no one could be more fitted for the vacant post than Mr. Mumgrizzle himself, and undertook both to get him the appointment, and to put him in possession of the glebe house, and its appurtenances.

Accordingly, in about ten days after the events

recorded in the last chapter, the Earl of Stamford who at that time had the charge of pillaging all that kept faith and allegiance to the king in the district wherein Milford was situated, sent a troop of horse to appropriate for the use of the State (for in that day, as well as in our own, public theft was called "appropriation,") all the victuals, corn, and household stuff on which they could lay their hands; and so faithfully did they execute their commission, that they not only carried off every thing of the slightest value which was moveable, but they broke up and burned the heavier articles of furniture, they seized the property of the servants, stripped an infant in its cradle for the value of its clothes, and when Mrs. Dolben and her children besought them on their knees to leave them one loaf, they refused the petition, swearing with frightful oaths "that they would keep them so short, that they should eat the very flesh from their arms;" and when they had turned the miserable family out of doors, they actually took security of the neighbours that they would give them no food, and threatened the village miller, "that if he ground any corn for the malignant woman and

her children, they would grind him in his own mill."*

It was in the dusk of a cold, rainy, autumnal evening that Mrs. Dolben found herself ejected from her home, surrounded by her terrified and weeping little ones, and bearing in her arms her naked infant. Her first care was to strip off some portion of her own clothing, and wrap it round the chilly limbs of the helpless babe; her next to endeavour to find some place of shelter for the night. The troopers being still in the village, she did not choose to expose any of her poor neighbours to the risk of that barbarity and plunder, for which their harbouring her

* See an account of the treatment experienced by the family of Thomas Swift, Vicar of Goodrich, in Herefordshire, in Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy, p. 361, in which, in addition to the atrocities detailed above, and many others, it is recorded that the mother of the family being obliged to fly for her life, was unable to carry her unweaned infant with her; and the Puritan soldiers, continues Walker, "ransacking every corner of the house, that nothing might be left behind, they find a small pewter dish in which the dry nurse had put pap to feed the poor babe: this they seize on too: the nurse intreats for God's sake, that they would spare *that:* pleading that in the mother's absence it was all the sustenance which was, or could be, provided to sustain the child's life; and on her knees intreated to shew mercy to the child, that knew not the right hand from the left: but" instead of granting her petition, "they threw the food to their dogs, and put up the dish as their lawful prize."

might have afforded a pretext; and therefore on leaving the rectory, she proceeded at once into the fields behind it, in hopes of gaining admittance into a barn which lay at no great distance. But she was doomed to disappointment, the barn was locked, and the nearest dwelling house a mile distant. The mother pressed her baby to her bosom, and burst into a flood of tears. But she was not one to yield to the impulse of her feelings, and become helpless when it was her duty to exert herself. For a minute or two she sat down upon a stone which lay near her, to reflect what was the best course to pursue, and then wiping away her tears, and kissing her children one by one, she bade them be of good comfort, they would soon walk a mile, and they would be safe from further violence at Goody Bink's lonely cottage. They had hardly proceeded a hundred yards, however, before two or three drunken troopers dashed by in the very direction to which they were going. The unhappy family were thus once more cut off from their hope of security; and Mrs. Dolben was reflecting how she could best protect her children from the inclemency of the night air to which they now seemed destined to be

exposed, when the sound of the church clock, and the sight of the old tower looming through the evening mist, suggested the thought that there was a chance of shelter within its walls. Thither, therefore, Mrs. Dolben turned her steps, creeping along the hedge sides, and pursuing the most circuitous route, and followed in silence by her children.

It was now nearly dark, for the moon had not yet risen, but before Mrs. Dolben reached the field nearest the churchyard, she became sensible that some person was following her steps at a little distance. When she stopped, the figure stopped too, and apparently endeavoured to conceal itself. The mother's heart beat fast, and she hesitated whether or not to advance further: but on looking back at a moment when the figure of her pursuer was no longer shrouded from observation under the shade of the hedge, but was standing out in full relief against the sky, she perceived to her unspeakable comfort that the dreaded intruder was a woman like herself, and she therefore resolved to approach her. She had not retraced many steps when the stranger hurried forward, and exclaimed: "Is it Madam Dolben? Thank God I have found you at last!"

"Oh! my good Mary Gretton," cried the clergyman's wife, recognizing instantaneously the voice and person of one of her poor neighbours, "Are you a sufferer like myself? Have you been driven out of your home this bitter night?"

"Oh no, Ma'am, the wicked soldiers have spared us,—but we heard what had happened to you; and so Ann Clarke, and Dolly Banks, and Margaret Fletcher, and I agreed that we should each of us take a different road, find out where you were, and bring you food and what we could for the poor children. Bless their hearts, poor things, they must be well nigh clem'd with cold and hunger. Alack, alack, that we should have ever lived to see such a day as this."

Deeply touched at the kindness and affection of the generous cottagers, Mrs. Dolben attempted to express her thanks, but the tears choked her utterance; and she could only press Mary Gretton's hand.

"Ah, dear, dear!" cried the latter, "your hand is as cold as a corpse's; and these darlings will perish if they stand longer here. I dare not offer you a lodging in my cottage yonder, (though I am sure,

Madam, you are welcome to it, and every thing else, for you have been a good friend to me and mine, and I owe you more than I can ever pay) but the town is so full of those rascal soldiers, that you would not be safe for a moment; but the last place they are likely to come to will be the Church, and if you could make shift to sleep there to night, we, (that is Ann Clarke and I) could make you tolerably comfortable; I have brought some bread and meat in my basket, and a bottle of milk."

By this time they had entered the churchyard. All was still and quiet there, save the owls that ever and anon hooted to each other as they wheeled along in heavy flight, and quitted in search of prey the dark yew-trees which sheltered them during the day time. The children started, and clustered round their mother, at the unwonted sound, but the wanderers were exposed to no more serious interruption, and in a few moments they entered the church-porch. This porch, (as is not uncommonly the case,) contained a small chamber, (or parvise, as it was anciently called) in the story above, which was supposed to have been the sleeping apartment of the

chantry-priest, and which Mrs. Dolben thought would be a resting-place, secure at once from interruption, and less irreverent than the interior of the Sacred edifice itself. All the other doors of the church had been broken open, as the reader knows, a fortnight before, and (considering who had now the chief authority in such matters,) it need hardly be added that they had not been subsequently repaired. It happened, however, that on the day when the House of God was exposed to the ravages of the Puritans, the parvise had been overlooked : the doorway of entrance to the staircase which led to it, being small, and hidden by the main door of the church when thrown back on its hinges, had escaped observation, and unluckily for Mrs. Dolben remained locked.

So the mother and her children sat down on the bench in the porch, and while they ate with thankfulness the food which their kind friend had provided for them, Mary Gretton proceeded into the church to look for some sheltered spot in which they might pass the night. The moon had now risen, and beaming through the broken windows, and open

doors, revealed with tolerable distinctness the interior of the church. Everything was in the confusion in which it had been left, and the cold wind, as it sighed through the deserted aisles, seemed to mourn over the melancholy scene, and the desecration which had come upon the House of God. Vain, however, were Mary's attempts to find a sheltered spot; the night air seemed to rush in eddies round every pillar, and to pour down from every broken lattice, and she was about to leave the body of the building, and endeavour to find a more comfortable place in the room below the bell chamber, when Squire Blote's new pew struck her eye, At first she hardly comprehended its nature and object, but on entering it she speedily made the discovery (although it possessed none of the cushions and carpets, and luxurious accommodation of modern pews) that it was still a very tolerable resting-place for a homeless family on a cold night. "It's a pity," she said, looking upward at the mass of carpentry, which supported by corkscrew columns at each of its four angles, formed a sort of canopy above the seat; "It's a pity they didn't make the lid fit close to the top of

the box; it would have been more private for them as could'nt say their prayers with their neighbours, and all the warmer for you, Madam," addressing Mrs. Dolben, "but it looks all the more like the tester, if you can but think yourself in bed." So saying, she heaped together a quantity of the rushes with which the church was strewed, and having stripped off her cloak, spread it over them, and thus made a soft and easy resting place for the mother and her children. Nor was this the full extent of Mary Gretton's kindness, or the only proof of her affectionate solicitude: for when she had taken leave of Mrs. Dolben, and closed the church doors as well as she was able, instead of returning home, she continued to perambulate the churchyard for the remainder of the night, ready to give alarm on the approach of an intruder.

There is no kindness like the kindness of the poor; nothing so affecting as their devotion to those to whom they really feel themselves indebted; nothing so refined, so delicate, so thoughtful as their attentions where they choose to bestow them. Those only who do not know them can speak harshly of

them. Some of course there must be who are false, or mercenary, or ungrateful; but speaking of them generally, the more they are known the more will their merits be appreciated; their patience, their self-denial, their kindliness one towards another; and no one can have much intercourse with them, without realizing in his own feelings those touching lines of Wordsworth:—

> "I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
> With coldness still returning;
> Alas! the gratitude of men
> Hath oftener left me mourning."*

While Mary Gretton was thus keeping watch and ward without the Church, the Rector's family were settling themselves for the night in Mr. Blote's pew; and so soon as they were alone, Mrs. Dolben knelt down with her children, and offered up her thanksgivings for the mercy which had carried them safe through the perils of the past day; and then, when in addition to their usual prayers for protection through the night, she had besought God to pardon their enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts, the whole family laid themselves

* Works. Vol. 3, p. 225.

down to rest. The children, weary and exhausted, were scarcely in a recumbent posture before they were in a deep sleep; for a time their mother was too anxious to be able to share their slumbers, she started at every gust of wind, and the rustling of the ivy on the old walls seemed to her fevered imagination like the approach of the spoilers. But in a while she reflected that it was her duty for her children's sake to get all the rest she could, and so after comforting herself by repeating such Psalms as the 91st., and 121st., and by remembering in Whose House she was, and to Whose protection she had committed herself, she laid her head on her rushy pillow, and slept as calmly and undisturbedly as the infant at her breast.

Perhaps the reader will wonder at the minuteness of these details, but as its affording shelter to the Dolben family in their distress was the *only good thing* which can be predicated of the Blote Pew, during the two hundred years which it existed, *a sense of justice compels us not to withhold the praise, that on a very pressing emergency, it was not a very bad bed.*

Of the fortunes of those who witnessed the erection of the edifice in question, it is not our purpose to say much. The day after their ejection from Milford Rectory the family of the persecuted Rector left the parish, and escaping further perils, contrived in obscurity to gain a precarious livelihood.

Meanwhile, the Puritans had it all their own way at Milford Malvoisin. Mahalaleel Mumgrizzle was appointed Minister, took possession of the vacant Rectory, and Mr. Blote occupied his new pew, and occasionally, it is believed, slumbered throughout the greater part of his chaplain's long-winded discourses. The church was well filled at first, for many people were curious to see how the late vendor of cow-heels would acquit himself; but when they found that his performances were just such as might have been expected, and nothing more, the congregation dropped off one by one, and at the end of a couple of years, Mr. Blote and his immediate dependents were the only attendants on the intruder's ministrations.

Nothing went well: a sort of blight seemed to have fallen on Milford Malvoisin and all its belongings. The people grew vicious and discontented;

profligacy of every kind abounded more and more, and that which was once a well ordered parish, became proverbial for the bad character of its inhabitants. They had cast off their allegiance to the Church, and the crime failed not, even in this world, to bring its own punishment with it. As for the Squire, himself, he found to his cost, ere a long while had elapsed, what manner of spirit he had introduced among his neighbours. He soon discovered that the viper he had warmed and cherished for the destruction of others, could turn upon himself; he learned, by bitter experience, that the flood once admitted, was indiscriminate in its violence, and that he had no security of not being swept away by the torrent. Heretofore he had been unpopular through his grasping, greedy disposition, and over-bearing temper, but nobody shewed their dislike by overt acts: *now* he saw himself detested, and nobody attempted to conceal it: the artificial barriers of rank and station once broken through, he had no other claim on the respect of his neighbours, and he was treated accordingly.

Nor was this all: his estate become involved, and

misfortune after misfortune came crowding upon him. Like the wicked Uncle in the ballad of the Babes in the Wood,—

> "His barns were fir'd, his goods consum'd,
> His lands were barren made;
> His cattle died within the field,
> And nothing with him stayed."

As years passed on he became so fractious and ill-tempered, that it was with difficulty any person could be prevailed upon to continue in his service; and when a stroke of paralysis had distorted his features, and impeded his utterance, he became such a miserable object that it began to be whispered abroad that his misfortunes were not like those of other men, and that he was certainly possessed, or bewitched; and this opinion grew so strong that Mr. Mumgrizzle at length resolved, according to the received fashion among the Puritans, to convene an assembly of ministers, who should, by their prayers and exorcisms, deliver his patron from the power of the Evil One. What might have been the result of such a plan it is hard to say,—probably Mr. Blote would have kicked his visitors down stairs if he had been strong enough to do so,—but Mr. Mumgrizzle's benevolent in-

tentions were frustrated by a circumstance which had never entered into his calculations;—his patron, in the course of the year 1659, was seized with a fit, while in church, which carried him off instantaneously.

It happened upon the occasion in question, that Mr. Mumgrizzle had been rather annoyed by the loudness of the Squire's snoring at the commencement of the sermon. The sound, indeed, was anything but an unusual one, but still as the Preacher was dwelling with peculiar unction on what was with him a very favourite subject,—the impossibility that a Church-of-England-man could be saved,—he was unwilling that the congregation should lose any portion of the arguments by which he supported so charitable and comfortable a doctrine, and he was proportionably vexed at the snortings and stertorous breathings which proceeded from Mr. Blote's pew. However, the noise waxed gradually fainter, and by the time that Mumgrizzle (warming with the subject) had turned the hour-glass beside him, and was preparing to enter on his thirteenth sub-division, the Squire was as quiet as a lamb. And no won-

der,—the apoplexy had done its work; and as he was ensconced in his inclosed seat, nobody could *see* that there was anything amiss. Had he not been so boxed up in his own pew as to be out of sight, the seizure would have been known, and help might possibly have been rendered, while help could have availed him. As it was, however, when the serving-man opened the pew-door, he beheld his master sitting bolt-up in the corner of the pew, with his jaw dropped, his eyes glazed, and his once empurpled countenance changed to a dingy yellow;—in a word, stone dead.

A pleasant consideration this, for nervous people who are fond of having their pews all to themselves!

Such an event was a heavy blow to the Puritans of Milford Malvoisin, and Mr. Mumgrizzle preached for seven Sundays consecutively, on the virtues of the deceased Squire, the wickedness of witches, and the troubles that were come upon the Faithful. Before another year, however, was over, Mr. Mumgrizzle found himself beset by far heavier troubles,—the restoration of the lawful King, the downfall of

Puritan mis-rule, and the extreme probability of his own speedy ejection from the office into which he had so unworthily intruded himself. But Mahalaleel was not the only man who found himself similarly circumstanced; many, indeed, who had left their shop-boards for the pulpit, now quietly returned to their former professions, and ceased to advocate the cause of Puritanism, or in other words, that of tyranny, rebellion, and spiritual pride. But Master Mumgrizzle had lived too long and too comfortably in the parsonage of Milford Malvoisin to be able to make up his mind to revert to his ancient trade as a seller of tripe and cow-heels. Accordingly, having turned all his property into ready money, pocketed a considerable amount of the parochial charities, and sold all the timber on the glebe,—this worthy joined his friend Thunderplump, and in company with many others who felt that Britain was no longer the place for their mischievous principles and dark intrigues, embarked for New England, where he set up the trade of a witch-finder, and endeavoured, (though for the credit of human nature we are happy to add that his diabolical scheme

failed,) to revive the horrible persecution which twenty years before the Puritans had raised against the weak and friendless of their own countrymen whom they chose to denounce as leagued with Satan.*

A few months saw Mr. Dolben re-instated in his parsonage and restored to his parishioners; who profiting by their dear-bought experience, welcomed his return among them with sincere and heartfelt joy. He had escaped from the custody of his gaolers, and thus avoided being sold as a slave to the Turks, but his life for many years had been one of extreme privation and danger, and it was more than eight years after his ejection from Milford before he was re-united to his wife and children, whom he found living in obscurity in the north of England.

His first object in returning to the home of his youth was to restore to its ancient decency and honour the church which, through a long course of

* Under this monstrous delusion (if indeed it was a delusion, and not a mere cloke for yet deeper wickedness) the Puritans racked and murdered not men and women only, but infants and dogs. See Mather's Magnalia, Book vi. ch. 82; and Walter Scott's Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft, p. 274—282.

years, had been left to desolation and decay. At this pious task he laboured early and late; to it he devoted nearly the whole of his professional income, and, together with his family, submitted to all manner of privation and self-denial in order to gain the blessed privilege of repairing the breaches in the House of God. Nor did he want active coadjutors; his own return to Milford was speedily followed by that of Obadiah Degge, who was but too glad to cast aside his buff coat and sword belt, and enter once more upon his old duties, which, to say truth, were more congenial to his taste (albeit in his latter days he was wont to tell mercilessly long tales about himself and Prince Rupert) than the wandering life and daily perils of the stout-hearted Cavaliers. He, therefore, was among the most energetic labourers in the work of restoration, and great, as may be supposed, was his joy and pride when he discovered the Communion plate safe and sound in the place where he had buried it the night before Mr. Blote's sacrilegious visitation: the only thing wanted to complete the old man's triumph was to have it shared by his favourite nephew Eli Riggle, and even

this sweet drop was mingled with his cup, for he lived to see the saucy, mischief-loving boy, who had so effectually aided him in his designs upon the Squire and his myrmidons, return to Milford Malvoisin a monied man, with a competency honourably gained, and that without any sacrifice of loyalty to Church or King.

Still, although it was thus permitted the chief actors in the scenes we have described, to meet once more under happier auspices, they were all altered men. Chance and change, care and trouble, losses and bereavements, had done their desolating work, and the tone and temper of their minds had suffered from the unsettled character of the times. Mr. Dolben felt this, and he felt, moreover, that much of his future usefulness depended upon the discretion which he should display in soothing and allaying the angry feelings which the long period of civil strife had engendered among his flock. And to this may be attributed an incident which otherwise would have seemed to betray a very culpable indifference towards the orderly arrangement of his church.

"To be sure," said he one day to Obadiah Degge,

"the church is sadly defaced with those half dozen pews that have been erected in our absence!"

"Ah! you may well say that, Sir," was Obadiah's reply; "in my poor judgment, the place looks now for all the world as if a giant had thrown down at random a handfull of packing boxes on the church floor: I suppose, Sir, you will have them all taken away?"

"I will try and induce the occupiers to remove them."

"But suppose they won't agree?"

"Why then, Obadiah, we must e'en let them stand. Circumstanced as the Church now is, we must take great care that those who have once actually cast off their allegiance to her, and trampled her in the dust, should not have any fresh excuse for seceding from her; we must make allowances, and try to win them to a better spirit by degrees. Pews are unsightly things, which never could have been formed except where Christian humility was absent; still it seems better to bear with them in this season of distress. Nay, even yonder structure" continued the Rector, pointing to Mr. Blote's pew,—"even

yonder structure, made as it was by unholy men of fragments of what had been sacrilegiously destroyed, may well be tolerated for a while, if it serve in its very deformity to remind us and our children, that of all the sins into which men can fall, spiritual pride is the most dangerous, and the most inevitably destructive."

Thus it fell out that Mr. Blote set the fashion of Pews in the Church of Milford Malvoisin; *and the fashion was worthy of its Patron, and the principles of his Party.*

BOOK II.

The Churchmen.

"An I have not forgotten what the inside of a Church is made of, I am a peppercorn, a brewer's horse."

SHAKSPEAR.

CHAPTER V.

New Occupants.

She strove the neighbourhood to please,
With manners wondrous winning;
And never followed wicked ways,—
Unless when she was sinning.

At church, in silks and satins new,
And hoop of monstrous size;
She never slumbered in her pew,—
But when she shut her eyes.

Goldsmith.

We are disposed to think that if we were to give with any great minuteness the entire history of our wooden hero, the *Pew*, we should produce a very unreadable, and (which would be infinitely distressing to our own proper selves) *unsaleable* book, and therefore, after the example of Shakspear and a

vast body of authors who have found themselves in a like predicament, we shall

> "——turn the glass; and give our scene such growing
> As you had slept between:"

and

> "Take upon us in the name of time
> To shift our wings."

In a word, we shall pass over the events, or rather the uneventful period of two hundred years, and with only a very brief notice,

> "——— leave the growth untried
> Of that wide gap." *

Upon the decease of Mr. Blote his estate was sold, and another family took possession of Milford Grange. But the new Squire was a courtier, and sharing in the profligacy of the time, passed his days in the dissipations of the metropolis, and only visited Milford Malvoisin for the purpose of collecting his rents; —so the great pew continued empty for many a year, till the Squire died, and his maiden sister succeeded to the estate: then once more the pew found an occupant, and a little cross-looking old woman appeared

* Winters Tale. Time's Prologue to Act IV.

Sunday after Sunday, seated in solitary dignity in one corner of its ample inclosure.

It happened, however, that upon some unlucky occasion, two or three strangers paid a visit to the church, who seeing no vacant places elsewhere, very naturally concluded that there would be no great harm in entering a pew twenty feet long, by six wide, which was wholly unoccupied. They had hardly taken up their position, however, when Miss Wrinkletrap made her appearance; and after gazing at them with the same sort of expression which we may imagine Macbeth exhibited when he discovered his seat already filled by the ghost of Banquo, she actually turned on her heel, and left the church. But by the following Sunday a strong lock had been affixed to the pew door, and for twenty years afterwards Miss Wrinkletrap carried the key in her pocket to church, and having admitted herself, locked the door on the inside, till service was over.

Meanwhile, the taste for pews was on the increase; nobody could pray unless they had a box to pray in: the gentry had set the fashion, and the farmers must imitate the gentry, and the small tradesmen must

imitate the farmers; and so it came to pass that the poor were forced into the coldest, darkest, and most distant corners of the church, till, by degrees, so few sittings were left for them, that those who came late had to stand about in the aisles, or to rest themselves on the steps of the chancel. Thus the pews of the rich, drove the poor to the meeting-house; and the pride of the upper classes produced in great measure the schisms we now deplore. Like the hypocrites of old, they would not enter the way of Life themselves, and those that were entering in they hindered.

From the æra of the Revolution may be traced the rapid downfall of Church principles; a low standard of faith and duty was introduced among the Clergy; politics rather than piety were made the test of merit; coldness and latitudinarianism abounded; the ordinances of the Church were neglected, her frequent services abandoned, and her influence grew weaker and weaker, while the apathy and carelessness of her children proportionably increased.

Of course Milford Malvoisin did not escape the infection; its inhabitants received the impress of the time, and in the Church, as elsewhere, the religion of

the day held its place. One Squire succeeded to another; one came to church, one did not; one loved fox-hunting, and the ale-cask; one loved his claret and deep play; but each new occupant of the Grange growled more than his predecessor at a church-rate, and grumbled more at the payment of tithes: each treated the Clergyman more and more as an inferior, and, perhaps, alas! each Rector failed more and more to maintain his proper position, and assert his rights spiritual and temporal.

Under such circumstances the pew-system continued to flourish: and Divine service being looked upon by many as little more than a mere form, it became rather an advantage than otherwise that each family should be hidden from its neighbour, and neither should be aware of the indecencies which the other was committing in the House of God. For instance, under the "boundless contiguity of shade" produced by Mr. Blotc's canopy over the Grange-pew, the little boys of the family could crack nuts, make faces at each other, cut their names on the pannels, and draw caricatures in the fly-leaves of their Prayer-books without any risk of their being seen, and

their bad example followed by farmer Bull's hopeful progeny, who were content with spinning cock-chafers at the proper season, and sucking liquorice, and lolly-pops during the remainder of the year. So, in the obscurity of the same pew, the young Squire and his pretty cousin having sat opposite to each other for many Sundays, and grown weary of counting the bosses on the roof, began to study the expression of each others eyes, and arriving at the conclusion that it would not be disagreeable to either if they knelt side by side, contrived during successive litanies, to carry on their courtship so prudently, that not a soul suspected it, till after their clandestine marriage; which, of course, prevented many premature reports, and at the same time hindered the infection of flirtation from spreading among the plough-boys and maid servants. So, likewise, under the same convenient veil of privacy did the old Squire compose himself to slumber as soon as the sermon commenced, without any risk of its being positively ascertained that certain guttural sounds did not, as was charitably supposed, emanate wholly and solely from his lady's lapdog. In short, the great pew had

its advantages as well as its dignity, and as by the commencement of the nineteenth century it had begun to look very venerable in comparison with the deal boxes which filled all the rest of the church, there is no knowing how much longer it might not have been preserved in statu quo.

It unfortunately happened, however, for those who admired the structure in question, that the parish clerk having sent down his two boys to clean the church, according to annual custom, on Christmas eve, the lads took it into their heads that a game at ball would lighten the labours of the broom. At ball, therefore, they played, till, in an unlucky moment, the ball lodged on the top of the canopy which overhung the pew. Of course it was fine fun to swarm up the spiral pillars that supported it, and had they been content with reaching the lost ball no great mischief would have been done, but when, having mounted the canopy, they proceeded to dance on it, the natural result followed; that which from below appeared sound enough, was in fact worm-eaten through and through, and so completely decayed, that it gave way bodily in the midst of the boys'

antics, and came down with a tremendous crash just as the clerk entered the church, and thereby gave him in the shape of a doctor's bill a fruitful warning of the inexpediency of doing his work by deputy.*

At the time when this circumstance occurred, that is to say, some six or eight years ago, Sir Peter Pinfold had recently completed the purchase of the Milford estate, and with his Lady had come down to take possession.

Sir Peter was just one of those good sort of people whom it is very difficult to describe, but who are

* The profaneness and irreverence exercised by the servants of the Church, vergers, clerks, sextons, pew-openers, &c., are so grievous that these persons ought to be constantly and narrowly watched by those in authority over them. It happened to the writer no great while since to visit a cathedral during the time of its annual cleaning. All the men employed were wearing their hats, and one of them was busy folding up a mat, which he laid upon a Bishop's tomb, and then whistled to his great bull-terrier to come and take possession of the bed he had spread for him. Still more recently visiting a church (famous for its painted windows) and which is now undergoing extensive repairs, he found the workmen singing at the full pitch of their lungs, which, however, was the less to be wondered at as they had two large jugs of ale brought into the church, during the short time the writer was inspecting it. The font had just been filled with cow's hair for the benefit of the plasterers. In another church, the ringers were in the habit of using the passage round the bell-chamber for the filthiest purposes imaginable. It is very painful to speak of such things, but no good can be obtained by passing them over in silence.

probably not a very rare class among our country gentlemen. He was respectable in morals, respectable in abilities, respectable in his family connexions, respectable in his worldly circumstances: a good, dull, ordinary man; plethoric, prosy, positive, and passionate, as Squires often become who have not much to do, have no dislike to flattery, are not exposed to much contradiction, consider poaching a worse crime than murder, and are usually called to the chair at turnpike-meetings. Moreover, he was some what obstinate and wrong-headed, and had a great abhorrence of improvements in general, and of rail-roads and political economy, in particular. He read little, and ate much, and as a talker, greatly preferred the subject of short-horns and shear-hogs to any other topic of conversation. But always bating his sudden gusts of passion, and an extreme sensitiveness with respect to his rights, Sir Peter had many amiable points,—was an excellent landlord, a kind master, and an indulgent father and husband.

Being, however, so jealous with respect to any infringement of his property, the catastrophe which had befallen the top of his pew, was just the thing to

throw him into a towering rage, and when the terrified clerk had made his confession, the Baronet broke forth into such a fury that he burst both the strings of his waistcoat, and nearly twisted his wig the wrong side before; then threatening the unlucky culprits with all the vengeance of the law, he wrote a note to the Curate (for there was no resident Rector) begging his immediate attendance.

Now it so happened that the Reverend Fashie Macfuss was even a later arrival at Milford Malvoisin than Sir Peter himself (having only been ordained Deacon two or three Sundays before); and therefore knowing nothing of the Baronet's peculiarities, he naturally took it for granted that something very important had occurred, and as he was exceedingly anxious to gain a high character for zeal, and to impress the Squire with a strong sense of his many excellencies, he put on his hat at once, and ran the greatest part of the way from his own house to Milford Grange.

There certainly is something very arduous and anxious in the mere act of undertaking the duties of

a parish. We are not now speaking of the awful responsibilities of the pastoral care,—of the diligence, the faithfulness, the humility, the caution, the single-heartedness, and the thousand other qualities required for the office of the Priesthood, the thought of which must needs be overwhelmning to every conscientious clergyman: we are simply alluding to the minor difficulties to which a young, shy, and inexperienced person is exposed, who finds himself transplanted into a crowd of strangers, whose eyes are all upon him, and who continually refer to him for advice and help which he as yet hardly trusts himself to offer. It would be an inestimable advantage to our clergy themselves if all were compelled to pass their Diaconate under some experienced eye, and thus serve an apprenticeship, as it were, before they were admitted to the sole charge of a parish. And how great the advantage to the Church would be if some such regulation were enforced, let the incumbents of our large towns declare, who are now compelled, as it were, "to serve tables," and are overburdened with a multitude of almost secular occupations, and other matters which would be more

efficiently performed by a body of Deacons. The period of a young man's first appearance in his curacy is, as we have said, an anxious time, but it is lamentable to observe how many difficulties our youthful Ministers create for themselves, when instead of entering on their appointed charge, in an humble, diffident, subdued tone of mind, they come burning with a zeal which seems to pre-suppose that nobody but themselves ever felt sufficient care for the spiritual welfare of their parishioners. Self-love is at the bottom of all this; and until that be eradicated, and the vanity that accompanies it, no man can with any sincerity say, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." And this very mischievous temper is confined to no party in the church. On the one hand it is easy to find persons of (so called) Evangelical principles, hindering instead of promoting the "free course" of that Gospel, of which they claim to be the exclusive advocates; and this, not from any lack of sincerity, but from vanity which offends, injudiciousness which disgusts, and sometimes, it is to be feared, from ignorance which

is painfully distressing to many of their parishioners.

On the other hand, we are continually hearing of all sorts of ill-judged outbreaks of zeal among young advocates of High Church principles. One man will go to a neglected parish, and revive daily service, before his flock have learned to be thankful that the church is opened twice instead of once on a Sunday: a second, on arriving at a place full of Dissenters, will, in his love of antiquity *(or notoriety)*, attempt the restoration of some usage long laid aside, or for which there is no very direct authority in our formularies, and thus lay himself open to the charges of Popery, and so forth: a third, with right feelings but unsound judgment, will do some act (right in itself, but injudicious from the circumstances or period of its adoption,) which will make his parishioners suspicious of his principles, though, if he would only have been content to wait a little until he was known, it might have been done with great advantage. And indiscretions of this sort *are far more inexcusable in High Churchmen than in others*, insomuch as *they* profess to allow them-

selves less license of judgment, and more ready and complete obedience to their ecclesiastical superiors than others do: and, moreover, if they really love the principles which they advocate, and feel that on their being steadily maintained the welfare of the Church depends, they will act upon the conviction that it is quite impossible to be too cautious in all they do or say; and though they will never yield an essential point through the mere dread of clamour, they will take care to determine accurately what is essential and what is not, and they will be more anxious to avail themselves of seasonable, than unseasonable opportunities.* After all, nearly the

* The only safe rule for a clergyman to follow, is to make no changes without license from his Bishop. This sort of deference to episcopal authority is the very foundation of Church principles. It is far better to suffer loss through the refusal of a Bishop to allow the restoration of a neglected practice, however valuable, than for an individual to take upon himself to make changes in the existing order of things without the sanction of his Diocesan. If young clergymen, (and it is to these only we presume to address ourselves) would give due weight to this reflection, we should hear no more of those indiscreet, not to say silly, proceedings, which have given such dire offence to the Low-Church party, which are viewed with so much alarm by multitudes of persons who dread what they consider as innovations, and which never fail to increase the difficulties (already so great) of those who endeavour to keep and advocate the true Catholic mean between Popery and Ultra-protestantism.

whole secret of a young man's clerical usefulness, will be found in his adherence to a pithy piece of advice which we once heard a very eminent person give to one with whom he was discussing the meaning of the Apostolic injunction, "Let not your good be evil spoken of;" "Ah, my good friend," said he, "remember my words, and when you come to have a parish of your own, don't turn that parish upside down, *just because you think yourself an angel.*"

Now this was exactly the rock upon which Mr. Macfuss split: he "thought himself an angel." We do not mean that he ever said to himself in so many words that he was better adapted for the office of parish priest than any body of his acquaintance, but he had a comfortable sort of assurance that he was just the person for the task, and he was full of visions of what wonderful reforms he was destined to accomplish, and what astonishing improvements it would be his fortune to introduce into the parochial system. He looked upon his reverend brethren generally, as dowdy both in body and mind, hedged about with prejudices as rusty as their coats; amiable, indeed, but indolent; learned, perhaps, in old-world

studies, but in everything else behind the rest of mankind: well-intentioned according to their views, but not fit to be compared for a moment with the rising race of clergy,—*and himself in particular*. Not that Mr. Macfuss exactly said all this to himself; he rather dwelt, as it were on the premises, than expressed any conclusion: *that* was a whispered secret between himself and his self-love.

The fact is that Mr. Macfuss had lived too long with his grandmother to be fit to live with anybody else. Being possessed of fair natural talents, a portion of Scotch shrewdness, and having plenty to say for himself, the good lady firmly believed that Fashie was destined to become a sort of second edition of the admirable Crichton; and of this she persuaded her grandson so thoroughly, that not all the ridicule he had met with in school and college could entirely dispel his opinions of his own consequence: it saved him, indeed, from becoming pre-eminently absurd, because he found his level; but vanity was still his all-absorbing passion, and he was never happy except as the person of first consequence.

Now this love of putting himself forward, and of

being "a Triton among the minnows," kept him in a continual state of excitement: there was no repose in his character; he never could be quiet; he was always in a fidget to be doing something, or saying something to attract notice. When, therefore, Mr. Macfuss found himself let loose upon a parish with nobody to control him, it may readily be imagined that his activity became quite appalling.

We should do him great injustice if we withheld from him the praise of a sincere desire to do right, to further the welfare of his flock by all the means in his power, and a hearty anxiety to win the affections of his people. But then it was for *his own* sake, rather than for the Church's, that he wished to be accounted zealous and indefatigable; and so the consequence was, that while trying to please everybody he succeeded in pleasing nobody. For instance, having observed elsewhere the unpopularity which a strong assertion of opinions on the part of the clergyman, had produced among his parishioners of a different way of thinking, Mr. Macfuss on his arrival at Milford diligently proclaimed that he was of no party. And herein he would have been quite right

(had such been the state of the case), for a good man has not, and never can have, any party but the Church. But Mr. Macfuss *had* a party,—and that, not the Church, but himself: and when he said he had no *party*, the truth was he had no *principles*. What he preached one Sunday, was inconsistent with what he preached the next; his views might be supposed to have arisen from the last book he consulted. Now he was high-Church, now he was low-Church, and now he was utterly indefinite and unsatisfactory. Upon the absurd notion of working out a system of divinity for himself, and in the self-confidence and vanity of being able to do so, he had never studied theology as a science, nor church-doctrines as a system forming one beautiful and harmonious whole; the result was, that his opinions seemed to come out by chance and at random, and thus in a short time he taught his flock to despise him. So, likewise, in the regulation of his parish the same error was committed: instead of wisely weighing his measures beforehand, going calmly and steadily forward, and never losing ground by attempting changes which he was not strong enough to carry through, he con-

trived to unsettle everything, and to settle nothing. Schools, clubs, lending-library, all were thrown into confusion with his improved rules and regulations. Nothing had been done well before he came into the parish, and nothing henceforth was to be done but he must be the doer of it; and so he fretted, and fidgetted, and worried his parishioners, till they grew impatient, and angry, and sick of him, and he had no more influence over them than if he had been a child of three years old.

We have dwelt at considerable length on the foibles (to use no stronger word) of Mr. Macfuss's character, because we fear that that character is not an uncommon one, and because there is much in the spirit of the times to foster it. And it is so desirable for us all

"To see ourselves as others see us,"

that no great harm will be done if any one of Mr. Macfuss's youth and inexperience, into whose hands these pages may fall, should set himself to examine very seriously how far he is in danger of falling into like errors.

To return, however, to our tale. By the time that

the Curate reached Milford Grange the first effervescence of Sir Peter's wrath had subsided, and he was beginning to suspect that it was not Mr. Macfuss's fault that the clerk's sons had broken his pew. Of course, therefore, he felt rather foolish, and did not know quite what to say, when the zealous pastor with very little breath, and very great agitation, expressed his hope that "the serious business" to which Sir Peter had alluded, was not one that would permanently affect the happiness of himself and Lady Pinfold.

The only thing the Baronet could do was to fan up the embers of his anger, and make a heavy complaint against the ill-manners of the Milford school-children, and state the recent enormity which had been committed against himself.

Mr. Macfuss was a very indifferent listener, and Sir Peter was rather verbose, but the Curate controlled himself till he had heard the full amount of the charge, (which, to say the truth, filled him with great glee, inasmuch it afforded him the opportunity of commencing fresh reforms,) and then he burst forth in a volume of condolence and apology. "But,

indeed, Sir," continued he, "it is no more than I expected. Between ourselves, everything in this parish has been so sadly mismanaged. My predecessor,—worthy, hospitable, kind-hearted man as he was,—was not adapted, by taste or constitution, to enter into those minute details of a parish, on a careful observance of which (as you and I well know, Sir Peter) everything depends. I am beyond measure vexed and annoyed,—and will commence tomorrow morning to put the schools on a different footing, and introduce the new system."

"Eh?" cried the Baronet, rather puzzled, "I never heard that there was any fault to be found with the schools; Drudgeit is a good man I believe, and makes the children respectful; all I complain of is the mischief the young monkeys do out of school-hours. I suppose these two lads that have broken down my pew, have got pretty well bruised; but otherwise I should have begged you to have had them well whipped."

"Whipped, Sir Peter?" ejaculated the Curate with a groan.

"Yes, whipped, Mr. Macfuss," replied the Baronet with a chuckle.

"Oh Sir, we never whip children under the new system; reason and moral consequences supply the place of the rod now-a-days.

"Fiddle faddle! man!" exclaimed Sir Peter testily, "don't tell me. Will moral consequences prevent boys from bird's nesting, or stealing my apples, or pelting the ducks?"

"Indeed I hope so," said Mr. Macfuss: "nay, when once our system comes into fair play, I have not a doubt of it; you may depend upon it that whipping is a fundamental error."

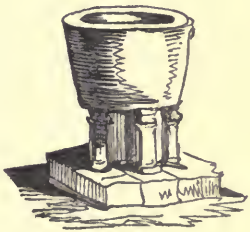
Now this was one of Mr. Macfuss's hobbies, so off he set at full score, overwhelming the Baronet with a torrent of words, fluttering and spluttering like a frightened hen, but producing no more effect than if he had bayed at the moon. A person of common judgment and taste would have seen in a moment that it was better to drop the discussion, whether right or wrong: but not so Mr. Macfuss, he was in love with the sound of his own voice, and was entirely satisfied that he was eloquent, when he was only profoundly tiresome.

However, Sir Peter had nothing to complain of, being fairly caught in his own trap. If he had not sent for the Curate, he would have been saved an hour's dissertation upon whipping. As it was, the Baronet began, at the end of that period, to feel as if a heavy corporal punishment had been inflicted upon himself: and, therefore, when Mr. Macfuss was out of breath, Sir Peter forbore to revive the discussion about the pew, and the conference was brought to a close;—the Curate returning home with his head full of visions of scholastic reform, and the Baronet wending his way to his Lady's boudoir, for the purpose of venting his spleen against our friend Fashie, whom he described as a man that without the slightest difficulty could talk off the hind leg of a horse.

Mr. Macfuss being thus disposed of, Sir Peter proceeded to consult his Lady's taste with respect to the Pew, and we are happy to have it in our power to record, that both husband and wife being satisfied that their Pew was a very handsome object, and that it behoved them that it should assimilate with their comforts at home, they agreed to have it immediately repaired, and lined throughout with crim-

son cloth, with cushions and hassocks en-suite; that the back should be well padded and stuffed; that it should be warmed with hot water; and that a series of brass rods and curtains should supply the place of the broken canopy;—that, in short, it should want nothing which comfort and privacy could add to repose.

There was a question also whether they should not present the church with a new Altar-cloth, but that was referred to future consideration.



CHAPTER VI.

The Intruders.

What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide?
They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide.
By land, by water, they renew the charge,
They stop the chariot, and they board the barge.
No place is sacred, not the Church is free,
Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day for me.

Pope.

When Sir Peter Pinfold (preparatory to his taking his ease therein) had repaired and refurbished his Pew, and thus deprived it "of a very ancient and fish-like smell,"—as Trinculo hath it,—he proceeded to adorn his mansion and pleasure-grounds; thereby affording a notable contrast to wealthy Squires in general, whose habit now-a-days is, to proceed in an inverse order, deferring their ecclesiastical restorations till they have made themselves thoroughly com-

fortable at home, and who rarely present their munificent bucket of white-wash to the Sacred edifice, till Blore has converted into "pure Elizabethan" the pure ugly structure erected by their grandfather, and till Messrs. Gillow have filled its saloons with a load of furniture of which the same venerable person would have been unable to guess the use or application. And hence, it not rarely happens, that those promised improvements at the church, which were reserved to be a bonne bouche at last, are postponed sine die, in consequence of the unexpected discovery that the beautified mansion has become about five times too big for the estate, and that upholsterers can put executions into a house as well as furniture.

But Sir Peter was no such unthrifty Squire: his wishes were far more moderate than his means; and though he both planted and builded it was to no greater extent than the condition of his estate required. And to say truth, Milford Grange was a spot worthy of all the care and pains that could be bestowed upon it. Backed by noble woods, it was situated in a recess on one side of an extensive valley, where it lay basking in the southern sun,

with a wide expanse of turf in front of it, gradually shelving down to the rapid, sparkling river which wound its way through the valley. It seemed, and was the very abode of retired seclusion and peace. But let no man who desires to shut out the hubbub of mankind, and enjoy the quiet pleasures of a country life, fix his habitation from henceforth *in a valley:* in the present state of things he may as well expect solitude at Charing Cross, or rural scenes in Cranbourne Alley.

"My dear," said Lady Pinfold to her husband, as they were standing on the terrace one fine evening in July watching the herd of deer fording the river, "My dear, I can't help thinking that Tom Denison has misunderstood you; you did not surely intend to have the plantation brought in a straight line along the valley?

"Why not, my love?" replied the Baronet, without taking his eyes off a lame horse which was limping in another direction.

"Because it will look like a hedge, Sir Peter; and a straight hedge running parallel with the river,

and within fifty yards of it, will spoil the whole effect of all you did so well last year, my love," answered the lady in a soothing tone.

"Nonsense!" rejoined her husband, still intently regarding the grey filly; "nonsense, my angel; people don't make plantations in July; if Tom Denison is staking out anything, it is the drain for the water-meadow."

"I didn't know that drains were cut at this season, and I didn't know you were going to turn the Bull-acre field into a water-meadow."

"No more I am," said Sir Peter.

Well then, if you'll only condescend to look this way, you'll see that Denison intends to do so."

The Baronet instead of doing as his Lady bade him, whistled and looked up at the sky. The first act was intended to shew his contempt of his wife's judgment, the second was a little gratuitous act of obstinacy.

"Well, my dear," replied Lady Pinfold with a meekness and placidity which all good wives assume when they wish to be more than ordinarily provoking, "I am quite aware I dont understand these matters;

I wish I did" (more meekly still); "for I should know the use of all those red flags."

"Red flags!" cried the Baronet, wheeling round in double quick time, "what in the world are you talking about? Why, bless your blind eyes! don't you see that that man is no more Tom Denison than he is your grandmother? What could induce you to go on chattering about drains and all manner of folly, when there are a set of people trespassing on my estate? Stars and garters! Lady Pinfold, there's mischief brewing there, you may depend upon it!"

And off set Sir Peter down the hill at full speed, without his hat, plunging into the fern, capering over the gorse, and more than once all but tumbling over a cow reposing among the bushes. Now as the Baronet was somewhat plethoric and short-winded, and as this rapid exercise took place on a sultry evening, just after he had finished a hearty dinner, it can hardly excite surprise when we say that when he had come sufficiently near the intruders to be within speaking-distance, and attempted to shout to them, he was so out of breath that he could not speak. And herein the enemy had a great advantage,

for so soon as they saw him approaching them, they apparently anticipated his object, and made great shew of hurrying onward to get their work done (whatever it might be) before he reached them: still, a person who had more their wits about them than poor Sir Peter had, might have seen that the trespassers were, in point of fact, purposely allowing him to reach them.

This Sir Peter did at length, and after sundry gaspings, and indistinct ejaculations, he inquired their names (for there were two of them) and business. He was thereupon informed, in the civillest manner, that he stood in the presence of Messrs. Smoke and Ochre, Deputy Assistant Engineers to the Company recently formed for the purpose of carrying into effect the "Grand Inland Railway," between Newton and Admaston; that the line would be carried through the park in the direction staked out; and they courteously added that they would endeavour so to arrange matters, as that it should not be necessary to take down more than the left wing of his mansion.

Nothing but a constitution of iron, it may be fairly presumed, prevented the proprietor of Milford

Grange from dropping down in a fit of apoplexy, at such an announcement. Ill would it become us to sully our respectable pages by detailing the incoherent exclamations and imprecations of that angry man. Rage, fury, and vexation burst forth in an uncontrolable torrent of abuse, which was concluded, of course, by the Baronet warning the intruders off his ground.

"Oh, pray Sir, restrain yourself," exclaimed Mr. Ochre, an unwholesome-looking young man of bilious temperament, "you can't think how bad it is for your health to go on in such a way. Nothing so dangerous as excitement."

"I intreat you, Sir Peter Pinfold," cried Mr. Smoke, a gentleman with dull grey eyes, and habiliments to match, "I intreat you to be patient; we have all our losses and crosses, and if you only knew how distressing it is to my feelings to listen to such language, I am sure you would be mollified. Our duty is an unpleasant one, and we really have a right to expect some courtesy from those whose estates we are going to make fifty per cent better than they could ever have been otherwise."

"Will you go, you impertinent scoundrels, or

must I knock you down?" roared the infuriate Baronet.

"Oh, Sir, we won't stay a moment; not a moment longer than to assure you...."

"Will you go?" cried Sir Peter, assuming the sort of attitude which a sheep does when it is going to butt.

"Not a moment longer than...."

"Will you go, or will you not?" vociferated the Squire.

"Yes, Sir Peter," answered both the gentlemen at once; and Mr. Smoke immediately added, "there is no reason why we should intrude upon you longer; the dew is falling, and perhaps you will take cold without your hat; we would not have detained you so long, but our coadjutors on the hill yonder, Messrs. Boyle and Bust, had not quite finished their survey, and it would have been inconvenient for them to have been interrupted. Good evening, Sir Peter,—good evening. We hope you wo'nt get wet in your feet; and are infinitely obliged for your courtesy; good evening, Sir Peter, good evening."

And the two gentlemen set off in double quick

time, to join their (hitherto unobserved) companions; and as the Baronet returned to the house indignant and crest-fallen, his ears were saluted with shouts of laughter from the four worthies, who were rejoicing over the successful issue of their operations.

The following morning, immediately after Sir Peter had finished his breakfast, and before the man of business had arrived, whom he had sent for express the preceding evening, on his return home, a hack-chaise drove up to the door, and a card was sent in, on which appeared the name of Mr. Moloch, Surveyor General to the Grand Inland Railway. For a long time Sir Peter protested that no earthly consideration should induce him to see his visitor; but upon Lady Pinfold's urgent entreaty he ultimately consented; and thereupon Mr. Moloch, a hard-featured, shrewd, disagreeable-looking man entered, and behind him followed a lawyer, astute and dirty, with a blue bag and a roll of maps under his arm.

Sir Peter stood in the middle of the room, with his mouth very much pursed up, and resolved not to fly into a passion—if he could help it.

"My name is Moloch, Sir," said the visitor, bowing, "and I am the chief surveyor and engineer to the railroad which we hope to carry through this part of the country."

Sir Peter grunted, and took a turn round the room; and then fixing his eyes on the lawyer said, "And pray, Sir, who are you?"

"I," answered the gentleman with the bag, "am representative of Messrs. Wiles, Frowze, Luker, and Swott, Solicitors to the Company."

"Sir," replied Sir Peter, "I can readily believe it; you bear it in your face; I can see the whole firm in your countenance. And now Messrs. Moloch, Wiles, Frowze, Luker, and Swott, I conclude your object in coming here is to apologize for the insufferable insolence of some of your underlings in presuming to enter my park."

"I am very sorry, Sir, if any of my young men should have mis-conducted themselves, Sir Peter," replied the Engineer, "but our duty to the public obliges us sometimes to appear indifferent to private interests; and I am come here to-day in the hope that you may be induced to enter into our views, or at

any rate, that some arrangement may be made which will be mutually satisfactory to both parties."

"But I don't want to have anything to do with you or your railroad. I don't choose to have you on my property, and I won't sell you a square inch of land."

"That, Sir," rejoined Mr. Moloch, "is a question which Parliament must settle. If, looking at all the circumstances of the case, observing the growing population of the two influential towns which we wish to connect, and the prodigious demand for their respective manufactures, — (to wit, dolls-eyes and mouse-traps) if, I say, Parliament, knowing and seeing this, is blind to the best interests of the country, and rejects our bill, of course, Sir Peter, we cannot interfere with you, but if, as we have every reason to anticipate, the measure will be carried by an overwhelming majority, the road will certainly be carried along the proposed line, and a jury will award a proper compensation to the occupiers."

"But do you really mean to tell me," asked the alarmed Baronet, "that you will come through my property whether I will or no, and throw up a hor-

rible embankment between this house and the river, and that we are to hear nothing all day long but your clattering trains, steaming, puffing, and stinking? Why the place will not be habitable! Who could bear to have their family seat so mutilated and destroyed? Look out of that window, Sir, and putting yourself in my position, say what would be your feeling if you were threatened with such an infliction?"

"Sir," answered the man of steam and iron, "I should be grateful for the offer, and conceive that the embankment you speak of, would be a pleasing addition to the prospect."

"What a beast you must be," muttered Sir Peter between his teeth.

"Perhaps, Sir Peter, you will not object to looking at the plan of the proposed line," said Mr. Wiles interposing, and proceeding to unroll the lengthy scroll which he had hitherto kept under his arm. "This, Sir Peter, is the line which I believe I may say has been finally decided on; some little variations have been suggested by some of the engineers; (Mr. Smoke, for instance, recommends that the rails

should be carried through the apartment in which we are sitting) but I think the line here drawn is admitted to be the best, and as such will be adopted. We shall enter your estate at a place which I think is called Broad-meadows."

"You are very kind," answered the Baronet bitterly, "it is the best land in my whole property."

"We then keep very nearly to the course of the river till we come to your home farm, which I am afraid must be removed. Here you see, at this point,—'Rogues-gap,'—we shall enter the bottom of the park, and taking the line marked out by Messrs. Boyle and Bust—(by the way, Sir Peter, you really must allow me to say that it was very uncourteous of you to pull up all their stakes) taking the line marked in red on the map, we shall pass one wing of this mansion, but I am disposed to think without interfering with it, and continuing our course north by east, shall cross the village, and take off a portion of the churchyard."

"Well really, gentlemen," said Sir Peter, very civilly, but looking very white, "this last does seem an injudicious arrangement for your own sakes?"

"Indeed!" replied the lawyer, "why so?"

"I should have thought that considering the number of people whom your trains are likely to kill, per annum, it would be rather expedient to increase than diminish the size of the churchyards which fall in your line."

"Oh, Sir, you are not aware how extremely liberal the Company have been in their arrangements, or what great consideration they have shown the public; they have devised a system which will combine the most rapid locomotion, with the tenderest regard to the feelings of surviving relations; there are to be stretchers and a dead-house provided at every mile; a surgeon is to be in constant attendance at every station; there is to be a hospital at each terminus, and an arrangement has been entered into with the directors of the Cemetery-companies at Newton and Admaston, for burying all accidents at half-price."

Sir Peter clasped his hands, and expressed his earnest wish that he had been bred an undertaker.

"If you will now be kind enough to look this way, Sir Peter, you will see that we enter your property

again on the other side of the churchyard, and I believe continue in it till we come to Deadman's Corner; and there we propose to erect a first class station, together with engine houses, and other structures which will employ many hands, and bring a great influx of population to Milford Malvoisin. We shall cut through about three hundred and fifty acres of your estate, and are quite ready to give you a just price for the accommodation; and as we shall materially benefit your property, we hope you will append your signature to the list of those very respectable gentlemen who are favourable to the measure."

"I will see you hanged first! yes, hanged gentlemen, — and drawn by your own trains, and quartered by your own engines. What! raze the dairy farm! destroy my park! pull my house about my ears! And this in a free country! But that my doing so would be a convenience to you, I would sell the estate to-morrow, and go live in Turkey. Do you really and seriously intend to commit this outrage upon me?"

"No, Sir Peter," answered a voice from behind,

"they have not the most distant intention of doing anything of the kind."

"Hey? my good friend, Thurlow, where did you spring from?" exclaimed the Baronet with a start of pleasure, for Mr. Thurlow was the solicitor for whom he had sent express, "Did you drop from the clouds? Or come down the chimney?"

"Neither, Sir Peter, I came in through that door which I found open; I have been here these five minutes, but you were all so busy that you did not observe me."

Mr. Moloch looked as if all his steam had escaped, and Mr. Wiles himself seemed utterly dumb-founded.

"You have heard then what these gentlemen propose?"

"Yes, Sir Peter, and will undertake to say that they have no notion of coming through your farm, or your park, or your house. This is not the first time I have been employed in these sort of matters, nor the first occasion on which I have met Messrs. Moloch and Wiles. Gathering from your hasty note last night, that some such proposal would be made

to you, I was on the ground early this morning, and though I am no engineer, I will undertake to say that the line just laid before you, is the very last these gentlemen would be inclined to adopt,—for this simple reason, that it would force them to make a tunnel through Crushingham Hill. I believe Mr. Moloch would not risk his well-established reputation by recommending such an expensive proceeding, when their object would be better gained by going through your lands at Pancake Flat."

Mr. Moloch stammered out that certainly other lines had been contemplated, or suggested; indeed some were still under consideration.

"But my friend Mr. Wiles," continued the Solicitor, "thought it would be no bad plan to turn his underlings into the park, and then to come up here and talk about an imaginary line of railway which would be the destruction of my client's estate, in the hope that when he subsequently made his *real* proposition to carry the road at such a distance from us as Pancake Flat, Sir Peter would snap at the proposal, and yield the point *there*, in order to escape an intolerable evil *here*. Ah, gentlemen, this is a very

sly manœuvre of your's," continued Mr. Thurlow, "but you have made it so common that nobody is taken in by it, except only a few, who, like my friend Sir Peter, think all the world as honest as themselves."

"Really, Sir," answered Wiles, addressing his brother lawyer, and looking all the while like a detected pickpocket, "I am quite at a loss what to make of such language, and doubtful what course I ought to pursue, but...."

"I tell you what, Sir, if you have any doubts on that score," said Sir Peter sternly, "I will settle them at once. The best thing you can do is to leave my house this moment, Sir; yes, Sir, this very moment, or you will be summarily ejected, Sir," continued the Baronet, walking up to the discomfited pettifogger, and putting himself into that *butting* position which we have already described, and which had such a powerful effect upon Mr. Wiles, that he immediately sprang out of a window which chanced to be open, and which had all the appearance from within, of being on a level with the flower garden, but which was, in fact, so many feet above it, that

the Solicitor to the Grand Inland Railway might have been seriously hurt, if he had not lighted on a thickset bed of double flowering gorse, which while it broke his fall, gave him nevertheless such a prickly reception, that for a fortnight after he felt as if he had been used for a pincushion.

CHAPTER VII.

The Dogs in the Manger.

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
* * * *
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
For 'tis their nature too.
But, children, you should never let
Your angry passions rise;
Your little hands were never made
To tear each other's eyes."

Watts.

It turned out just as Mr. Thurlow had predicted. There was blustering and wrangling for the lawyers, and murmurs and heavy bills for the clients on both sides; and then some hundreds of navigators (as they call themselves) were turned loose upon Pancake Flat, to form a line of rail-road at a very comfortable distance from Milford Grange, and Sir Peter had the satisfaction of feeling that he was not likely to have any more visits from Messrs. Smoke, Ochre,

Boyle, or Bust. Fortunately for the inhabitants of Milford, the country round them was so level that the engineers had no difficulties to encounter; there were neither mounds to be raised, nor deep cuttings, nor tunnels to be excavated, and consequently, their pretty village was not subjected for any great length of time to the plunder, and demoralization, which is the concomitant of such an irruption of vagabonds as a railroad in progress brings with it. Wherever you walked, you met huge brawny men, always very saucy, and generally very drunk, who asked for everything they wanted, and got whatever they asked for, because nobody dared refuse them. Sir Peter had all his game destroyed, and his stews emptied, but this was only to be expected, and was a matter of no great consequence, for he could afford the loss. It was different, however, with those in a class beneath him, and it was really grievous to see the Poor robbed of their poultry, or their potatoes, and afraid to speak about it, lest worse should befall them. But in six months the part of the line nearest to Milford was finished, and so the more crying nuisance was got rid of.

There was, however, one circumstance which, had it been properly attended to at the time, and called forth corresponding exertion on the part of the parishioners, might perhaps have saved them from a good deal of the annoyance to which they were exposed. Most of the depredations took place on a Sunday; now, had any encouragement been given, or any accommodation afforded, to such of the railway-labourers as chose to attend church, much evil might have been prevented, and much good, probably, might have been done. If, as was indeed the case, Milford Church was too small, and too much blocked up with pews to afford room for any great increase of the congregation, an additional service might, at any rate, have been provided, and opportunity, at least, given to those who felt anxious to attend the ordinances of religion. But the proper moment was not seized, and afterwards it was too late. For some Sundays after the bulk of the labourers came into the neighbourhood, a dozen or two of them dressed in their best clothes,—their necks adorned with showy handkerchiefs, and their waistcoats covered with a profusion of gilt buttons,—were to be seen sauntering

down the Church-path, as the chimes were ringing, but when they found that there was no room for them, and nobody was disposed to make room for them, their numbers rapidly decreased, and at length not above one or two continued to attend.

And nobody missed them, because nobody had thought about them except the poor people into whose seats they had intruded, and *they* of course were glad to get rid of them. But though the congregation at Milford had treated these poor men according to the fashion of the Nineteenth Century,—leaving them, that is, because they were poor, and ignorant, and ill-conditioned, to worship God how or where they could, or not to worship Him at all; and instead of endeavouring to keep them within the pale of the Church, all but thrusting them from it; and allowing them to join the ranks of dissent, or socialism, or infidelity,—because forsooth the rich cannot do without roomy pews;—although these poor men were so treated, and submitted to the privation without remonstrance, the parishioners of Milford were about to receive an addition to their population, by the arrival of a class of persons who were by no means disposed to take matters so quietly, and who

were destined to elicit some remarkable examples of the practical working of the Pew-system.

It will be remembered that Mr. Moloch announced to Sir Peter Pinfold that it was intended to have a first-class station within the parish of Milford, and that there was to be a depot for building the carriages and the preparation of divers other things connected with railway traffic. In due time all this came to pass; the station house was erected, with its smart stuccoed hotel, and in the rear, long ranges of buildings, forges, and furnaces, and I know not what beside, were to be seen, betokening the extensive manufactory which was about to be carried on. And no sooner were these completed, than ten or a dozen staring white houses, "in the villa style," as the newspapers say, were commenced as residences for engineers and other officers. So that by the end of a year a little town had grown up, on a spot where, in times past, there had been nothing but a turnpike-gate.

Now, of course, nothing can be clearer, than that large body of people for its own immediate benefit, a great public company, which brings together a should take care to provide for the spiritual wants

of those whom it has collected. It is the very least that can be expected of those who attract artificers and mechanics to any given spot, that they erect churches and schools for the accommodation of such persons and their families. But the directors of our railway had no such feelings with respect to their Christian responsibilities; their object was to get ten per cent on the capital they had expended, and so as they obtained that, it was matter of utter indifference to them whether their servants were Christians or heathens.

Meanwhile, if about half of the area of Milford church had not been rendered useless by the great square Pews which covered it, the increase of population created by the railroad might have been temporarily accommodated with seats, without any great inconvenience, and no time should have been lost in erecting a north aisle, to correspond with one already existing on the south side. This would have given the needful space, and, at the same time, rather improved than injured the general appearance of the building. But neither Mr. Macfuss nor his parishioners were prepared to act as the emergencies of

the case required. The former talked and fretted about the impossibility of finding sittings for the strangers, and set up two additional benches in the nave; and (Sir Peter Pinfold and his family being now absent for the London season) desired the clerk to shew the new members of the congregation into some of the numerous seats allotted to the servants at Milford Grange. The latter did not feel themselves called upon to make the least exertions in behalf of their neighbours at the station: they had their own pews, and that was enough for them.

By and by, however, Sir Peter and his family returned home, and then his domestics resumed their usual position. What was to be done? Mr. Macfuss went from pew-holder to pew-holder, to beg permission to introduce, one or more of the unlucky strangers (according as there happened to be room) into their several pews. He might as well have asked them to give him a thousand pounds. By some he was answered with civility, by some with rudeness; some were sorry that they could not under existing circumstances meet his wishes, others really wondered how he could bring himself to ask

such a thing; but in every case the refusal was prompt and peremptory : argument and entreaty were in vain, and while a few declined for the pleasure it afforded them to say "no" to a personal request from the Clergyman, the majority seemed to make it a matter of principle, and stood upon the danger of the precedent, and their unalterable conviction that as every man's house is his castle, so is his Pew the strong box of his religion, and to be guarded accordingly.

Mr. Macfuss returned home weary and disconsolate, and utterly at a loss what step to take next : in fact, there seemed nothing for him to do but to intimate to the new comers that there was no longer any room for them in Milford Church. This he did, and accordingly some of the parties addressed found their way to other churches in the neighbourhood on the following Sunday; but the remainder, (probably supposing that the members of a Christian congregation would not so far forget the principles of Christian fellowship, as absolutely to exclude them from the vacant places in their pews) ventured upon the dangerous experiment of attending Divine

service at Milford Malvoisin. The consequence was just what might have been anticipated ;—when Mr. Macfuss entered the reading-desk, there stood a crowd of respectably dressed people at the bottom of the aisle, looking foolishly at one another, and wistfully at the pews, for the benches were already full. Now and then some male friend of the ladies who were seeking seats, approached one of the half empty boxes, with the purpose of humbly requesting admission, upon which the occupants immediately spread themselves out so ingeniously, that it became difficult to assert that there was any spare room, or else they were one and all seized with such a fit of attention, and buried their noses so deeply in their Prayer-books that nothing could tempt them to look up: and this was done so demurely and inoffensively, that nobody would have suspected a preconcerted plot on the part of the pew-holders, if Miss Perky, a young lady, who, with her brother, were the sole occupants of a pew which would have held half-a-dozen more persons, had not on the approach of some strangers, called out in a voice which was heard all over the church, while every feature in her

little, white, spiteful face was quivering with agitation, "Oh, 'Arry, 'Arry, 'old the 'andle,"—thus intimating that she had cast off her humanity as well as her aspirates, and that those who sought admission to farmer Perky's pew were to be kept out by main force.

Fortunately, however, as it turned out, the young lady's exclamation was heard further than she intended, and caused Sir Peter Pinfold to look up. The worthy Baronet was, of course, quite unconscious of the real state of things, but so soon as he perceived a body of strangers unaccommodated with seats of any kind, he immediately opened his pew door, and beckoned them in. At the same time, Mr. Macfuss observing a pew near the reading-desk empty, and knowing that it was hardly ever otherwise, desired the clerk to shew the remainder of those who were standing about the aisles into it, and so the difficulty was got over for that occasion.

Great, however, was the indignation expressed, so soon as Church was over, at the Curate's unwarrantable presumption; dire his offence in the eyes of the pew-holders, and deep their sympathy with

Mrs. Tuff, to whose farm the pew in question was appropriated:—and more than one of the congregation instead of attending evening service walked up to the Vinegar Hill farm, just to condole with the widow, abuse Mr. Macfuss, eat a piece of sweet-cake, drink a glass of currant wine, and stir her up, (who, sooth to say, needed little stirring) to a manful maintenance of her rights: "the pew was her's," they reminded her,—"had been her father's before her; and so long as she paid her rates, whose business was it but her own, whether she made use of the pew or not? they had no notion of such impertinent intrusions: if the railroad people wanted pews they had better build them, or get seats in other churches, and not come and incommode the inhabitants of Milford."

The consequence of this was that the next morning early, Mr. Macfuss had to digest the following note as well as his breakfast:—

"Mrs. Tuff's compts. to Mr. Macfuss, and I am much surprised, Rev. Sir, that you should have allowed persons to be turned into my pew quite pro-

miscuous, more especially as Mr. M. had never asked Mrs. Tuffs permission.

Mrs. T. takes leave to say that she considers the intrusion most unhandsome, and what by no means bespeaks the gentleman (for gentlemen behave as such); particularly as she understands that there is plenty of room in contagious parishes. I therefore give you notice that I shall proceed against all future offenders with the utmost rigour of the law, according as my attorney, Mr. Blackadder, shall advise, and am, Sir, in the common acceptation of the term,

Your humble servant to command,

MARY ANN TUFF."

"Vinegar Hill Farm,
Sunday Night."

And Mrs. Tuff accordingly drove to the market-town in the course of the ensuing week, to consult attorney Blackadder: but finding from him that there would be some difficulty in suing the intruders for "a perturbation of seat" (that seat being constantly unoccupied) and that it was clearly unlawful to affix a lock to her pew door, Mrs. Tuff determined

to become a regular church-goer,—and both to occupy her pew herself, and to keep every body else out of it. And the plan she devised to insure both these points was as follows. She resolved to be in her pew at the time service commenced on the following Sunday, and to close the door effectually when she had entered it, by passing a gimlet or bradawl obliquely through the door, into the jamb. Accordingly, on Sunday morning she set off for church as soon as ever the bells began to ring, and might have reached her pew about five minutes before the Clergyman left the vestry, but, when she had got half way from home it flashed across her that she had left her defensive weapon, the bradawl, behind her. In no very sweet temper (for nothing makes a person of Mrs. Tuff's disposition so cross as having nobody to blame but themselves) the lady determined on retracing her steps, being satisfied that if she only made a little extra haste she should be in very good time. But whether she had over-rated the rapidity of her movements,—or whether there was a variation in the clocks, or Mr. Macfuss had really commenced the service somewhat earlier than usual,

is yet uncertain; but so it was, that when she entered the church the Curate was beginning the second lesson. Up the aisle she stalked, looking like a fasting ogress, till she came to her own pew,—and what she looked like *then*, it is hard to say, for the pew was full,—full, in spite of her admonitory epistle to Mr. Macfuss,—full, in spite of her fixed resolve to keep it empty! Whether the intruders read in her face that she was the legitimate owner of the sitting, or whether they were frightened by the concentrated venom which was sweltering in her countenance, they seemed to feel that room must be made for her somehow, and accordingly each pressed nearer to his neighbour, till a very ample space was left for Mrs. Tuff, who certainly lost no time in occupying it, for down she flounced upon the seat with a force that made it creak again. But the act was one which abundantly verified the proverb of "most haste, worst speed:" had Mrs. Tuff been less precipitate, she might have remembered that at the bottom of her capacious pocket there lurked a bradawl, and would have taken care not to sit upon it. As it was, however, if she sat down quick, she bounded

up again with double celerity, and in a condition which put an effectual stop to her occupying her pew for many weeks after:—for she was an inflammatory subject, and the bradawl was a long one.

But Mrs. Tuff was not the only person who returned home annoyed and discontented, on the occasion alluded to.

It happened that at another corner of the church there was a pew calculated to hold eight persons, and that four of the sittings were claimed by Mr. Crabstock the grazier, and the remainder by Mr. Nettleship of the mill. Now as each of these gentlemen had secretly resolved in his own mind to obtain, sooner or later, exclusive possession of the entire pew, as both of them were jealous of each other upon other grounds, and neither were particularly conciliating in their manners, or refined in their modes of expressing themselves, it may easily be conceived that when the whole eight seats were occupied there was a good deal of hostility packed in a small compass. Had the same number of individuals been placed side by side on one of the benches, their vicinity to one another would have bred no angry

thoughts. An open sitting would have been felt to be common ground, and ill-will (on that subject, at least,) would have evaporated; in a pew there was something to keep it warm, and so the venom was concentrated.

Such being the state of feeling between these two neighbours, it unluckily fell out that the Crabstock family leaving home for a week, on the occasion of Mr. Crabstock junior's marriage, Mrs. Crabstock the mother, lent the four sittings on the Sunday they were absent, to one of the railroad engineers, who accordingly appeared in Milford Church, the week before that of which we are speaking, with his wife and three little girls,—in all, therefore, five persons. No act could have been done more innocently, or with less intention of giving offence, and in point of fact, the three children did not occupy more room than two grown persons would have done, but Mr. Nettleship had no notion of seeing the matter in this point of view: he was satisfied that the Crabstocks had lent their seats to strangers for the purpose of annoying him and his family, and that the introduction of *five* persons instead of four, was an attempt to dispossess him of a portion of his rights.

So Mr. Nettleship, after meditating revenge all church-time, returned home, declaring that he would "be even with Crabstock, and that since the Crabstocks introduced strangers into the pew without having the courtesy to ask his permission, he would pay them back in their own coin,—aye, and with interest too." And he was as good as his word, for when (on the Sunday of Mrs. Tuff's mishap) the bridegroom and his bride, together with the parents of the former, proceeded to their pew, decked out in all the smart clothing which the occasion seemed to require, they found in place of the Nettleships, *five* young chimney-sweepers, who, on being asked their business, declared that "Muster Nettleship would gi'e 'em a shilling a piece to sit there all church-time:" and as of course it would not have answered for gentlemen, in white trowsers and lemon-coloured gloves, to attempt to eject them, the Crabstocks yielded the point, and found sittings with some of their neighbours.

As soon as service was over they repaired to the vestry, swelling with indignation, for the purpose of laying their grievances before Mr. Macfuss. But what could the Curate do? Shocked and disgusted

of course he was to the greatest degree at the *motive* which must have influenced the Nettleship faction, and he promised to lose no time in remonstrating with them, but remedy he could see none. If people will have Pews they must take the consequences; if they will squeeze and huddle together at church in a way they would be ashamed of doing at home, they have no cause of complaint, if now and then their pews,—like poverty,—bring them "strange bed-fellows." If a man has a pew allotted him, he has a right to lend it to his friends, and if his friends happen to carry soot-bags, his immediate neighbours must bear it as well as they can; there is no help for them.

And for ourselves we confess we are heartily glad there is not: the oftener pride becomes its own punishment the better.

From what has been said in a former chapter, the reader will have perceived that the Curate of Milford had little or no influence with his parishioners. And this arose, not from vice or immorality on his part,—for indeed his moral conduct was exemplary,—but from indiscretion and want of judgment; he made himself too common, was always interfering about

little, indifferent matters, and continually going out of his way to give advice which was neither desired nor needed. Hence, it unfortunately happened, that when the necessity for his interference really arose, what he said had no weight with anybody,—whereas, had he reserved himself for such occasions, he would have found that to the well-disposed part of his flock, the expression of his wishes would be law.

But the probability is that a far more judicious person than Mr. Macfuss would have failed of making any impression on Mr. Nettleship, who was a very churlish, unamiable man. Mr. Macfuss, however, did not fail of his duty: he went that very evening to the miller, and remonstrated with him most earnestly, and told him with all gravity and plainness of how great a sin he had been guilty, what insult he had offered to God, and what a scandal he had caused to his fellow-worshippers, by shewing that he carried his angry passions into the presence of Him, Who will only forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Mr. Nettleship's reply was foul personal abuse, and a declaration that he would do what he pleased

with his own pew. So the poor Curate, after replying with much meekness, returned home with anxious thoughts how best he might allay the storm which he saw gathering on all sides, and not without some regrets that he had ever undertaken the Pastoral superintendence of the parish of Milford Malvoisin.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Sitters and their Seats.

"————————————And such
May still be seen, but perforated sore
And drill'd in holes the solid oak is found,
By worms voracious eating through and through.
At length a generation more refined
Improved the simple plan———
And o'er the seat with plenteous wadding stuff'd
Induced a splendid cover.———
These for the rich: the rest whom fate had placed
In modest mediocrity, content
With base materials, sat."

Cowper.

Time, the reputed soother and alleviator of troubles, produced no calming effect on the angry folks at Milford: on the contrary, each week seemed to bring with it some fresh cause of disagreement and ill-will. The fire once kindled was not allowed to go out for lack of fuel; everybody who had a pew, and every-

body who wanted one, had something to add in order to keep the flame of contention glowing. People who had gone on contentedly for half a century, sitting week after week, in the same ricketty old box, without murmer or discontent, suddenly discovered that they had been very hardly used, and declared it to be great injustice that they had not had more room allotted them, or been placed more immediately opposite to the pulpit: some were too near the stove, some too near the door; some were all in the dark, some had their eyes put out by the sunshine; those, who like the Crabstocks and Nettleships had seats in the same pew, clamoured for an immediate divorce, while one or two large families, who contrived to fill two pews each, were intent upon having their divided sittings approximated, and their two small boxes made into one large one.

And then, to crown all, the colony at the railway-station grew more and more clamorous to be provided with seats in their parish church, and the Engineers (who of course looked at all matters of admeasurement with the interest of a professional eye) did not fail to reiterate the remark that the area of the nave,

under a different arrangement, might,—allowing eighteen inches to each person, (they were of course very slim themselves), and making the new pews of *sitting*, not kneeling, width,—contain the requisite accommodation.

It really was wonderful to see the state of agitation into which the parish was thrown, the vehemence with which the various clashing interests were maintained, and to hear of the number of ill-natured things said and done by people who had lived together for many a year, in uninterrupted amity and good-will, until they were seized with an attack of an epidemic (as distressing in its way as either "the dancing madness," or "the black death" of a former age, and) which, as being hitherto undescribed, might not be unaptly designated as the Pew-fever.

Such being the state of things, it will easily be conceived that the calling a Vestry-meeting was like the flames reaching the powder-magazine when a ship is on fire: it was the grand explosion, and consummation of the catastrophe. And never probably since its church was built, was Milford the scene of such a contentious debate as on the occasion when

the Churchwardens called together their fellow parishioners for the purpose of voting the usual annual levy of four-pence in the Pound, for the necessary repairs of the Sacred fabric. Every rate-payer, almost, resolved to attend the meeting, but with the full determination that he would pay nothing till he had secured the object on which he had personally set his heart; and as this object, generally speaking, could only be attained at the expense of a neighbour, who would consequently oppose it, the chances of an universal resistance to the rate was considerable: the church was, as usual, to be made the victim, because these stupid people would not agree among themselves, and were like children crying for the moon.

Accordingly, on the day appointed, the various contending parties met, and the result was such a scene of confusion as might have been anticipated. Mr. Macfuss, the chairman, endeavoured in vain to keep the speakers to the question immediately before them; nobody heeded him, half a dozen people were talking at once; and when after many remonstrances on his part, it was agreed that only

one speech at a time was desirable, each succeeding speaker became more and more personal, and wandered further and further from the four-penny levy, till by an easy transition, the discussion about the injustice of "some folks trespassing on other folks' pews," suggested the recollection to one rate-payer that his neighbour's sheep had trespassed into his turnips, and the angry expostulation and mutual recrimination which ensued, added fuel to the fire which was already hot enough.

At this moment some of the gentlemen from the Station made their appearance, and begged to ask what accommodation could be provided for themselves and their families in Milford Church. The inquiry produced an immediate silence, and everybody waited to hear what answer the Churchwardens would give. Mr. Blunt, who was the representative of the parishioners, was disposed to answer that they could be accommodated in the churchyard (whenever they wished it) but nowhere else. However, as Mr. Kirkscrew the Rector's Churchwarden, had been long in office, and was a leading personage in the parish, Mr. Blunt left it to him to make answer.

Mr. Kirkscrew was a very popular person, he never laid a church-rate when he could avoid it, and always took care to have the church repairs done by cheap workmen, in their cheapest manner; and being, moreover, exceedingly anxious to save his own pocket, and having anticipated the probability that such an enquiry would be made, he was not unprepared to meet it, and he did so by proposing another question; "Of course," he said, "the parish could not be expected to do anything for nothing. What did the gentlemen at the station propose to do themselves?"

They expressed a desire to have pews for their families, and seats for their artificers; and they were ready to build the former at their own expense, if the parish would find room.

Mr. Nettleship replied that they were already so crowded, that even old parishioners, like himself, had not an entire pew; but were subject to disagreeable and impertinent intrusions.

Mr. Crabstock remarked that he was in a similar predicament, though somewhat better off than Mr. Nettleship, since *he* found the intruders,—whe-

ther chimney-sweeps or otherwise,—infinitely more clean, sweet, and agreeable, than any members of the family with whom he had the misfortune to be associated.

Mr. Nettleship was about to make a pleasant rejoinder to his neighbour's conciliatory observation, but, on his attempting to rise, Mr. Kirkscrew pulled him down by the tails of his coat, and intreated him to be quiet.

Mr. Spokes, who was the advocate of the Engineers, then suggested that if the church were repewed there would be plenty of room for everybody.

But to this proposal nobody seemed to listen with patience. It was received on all sides with murmurs of disapprobation, and the pew-holders small and great,—the very people who had been complaining, and grumbling, and quarrelling half an hour before, over the inconvenience and unfairness of the present arrangement,—were all of a sudden smitten with the greatest repugnance to alterations. Something, they were ready to admit, should be done, if possible, for the new comers; but they could not consent to any

changes in those seats to which they had themselves a long established right. Some had built their pews out of their own pockets, some respected them because their grandmothers had occupied them, some had no particular reason to allege, but all, even Nettleship and Crabstock, resisted the plan for new pewing: they could not abide the narrow slips of pews that were built now-a-days,—they had long legs and could not bear being cramped, or they had short legs and so required a hassock instead of a kneeling-board:* they could not and would not sit in any but square pews; and besides, even if they sacrificed their's, Sir Peter Pinfold could not be expected to sacrifice his; and unless the Squire's great pew was taken down very little room could be gained.

But why should not the matter be laid before the Baronet, asked Mr. Spokes; he was a great landholder certainly, but nobody,—the king himself, could not fill a pew twenty feet long, and six feet wide.

Once more Mr. Spokes found himself in a mino-

* These abominations have apparently been named on the "lucus a non lucendo" principle. In nine out of every ten churches in which they have been introduced, it is impossible to kneel at all.

rity; the rate-payers had no wish whatever to interfere with the Milford Grange pew: it was the oldest pew in the church;—always had been there: some said it was built by Oliver Cromwell,—some had heard that it had been put up in Harry the Eighth's time,—some thought it a great curiosity,—and some a very handsome object. At any rate, for all these reasons, it would never do to have *that* altered: and there was one reason more which nobody adduced, but which was really the influential one,—they all feared that if the Pinfold pew was brought into a reasonable compass, their own boxes might suffer diminution.

"Well, gentlemen," answered Mr. Spokes, "of course it is impossible to think further of a scheme which seems so universally unpopular. But I have another suggestion to make. If those old tumble-down oak-sittings,—occupied at present by the Poor, were removed, there would, I apprehend, be room to erect pews for us new-comers without disturbing the occupants of the existing pews,—and I have already said that we would undertake the cost of their erection."

This was a delightful proposal: it got rid of every difficulty among those who were trembling for their possessions: and even Mr. Kirkscrew smiled blandly at a scheme which would save him trouble and cost him nothing, and so he appealed to Mr. Macfuss for his approbation of it.

"Why so far as the pew-holders are concerned," observed the Curate, "it seems a very convenient arrangement; but may I ask what you intend to do with the Poor? How are they to be accommodated?"

At this unexpected inquiry the assembled vestry looked rather blank: they had only been considering themselves: nobody had thought about the Poor.

"Dear me, they can sit anywhere," observed Mr. Clemmalive, a gentleman weighing eighteen stone, one of the board of guardians, and an inexorable dietist on the water-gruel system at the Union workhouse,—"Dear me, they can sit anywhere. There's not many on 'em comes, and for them as does, there's the Communion steps, which are very comfortable and well-matted, and there may be some new benches put lengthways down the aisle."

Mr. Macfuss shook his head, and said he did not think that upon reflection the gentlemen in the vestry would be satisfied with giving such meagre accommodation to the Poor. "They need encouragements," he thought, "and any obstacles thrown in their way would be a most serious evil: if but few came now, there would be fewer still when they were driven forth from their old seats."

"But suppose, my good Sir," interposed Mr. Spokes, "that we find them as good, or better places, what shall you say then?"

"I shall be quite satisfied," answered Mr. Macfuss.

"Well then, gentlemen," continued Spokes, "it appears to me that we may erect a gallery or two, at the west-end of the church with very little trouble, and perhaps another down one side, and this will afford ample room, not only for the Milford poor, but for our numerous artisans at the station, for whom some provision ought perhaps to be made."

Mr. Kirkscrew's wife's brother was a carpenter, who having erected a row of cottages and three shop fronts, dubbed himself a builder, and had in-

"Churches as they are."

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tended in a few months to set up as an architect, but his name having in the interim become rather well-known in the Court of Bankruptcy, he had postponed, for a short time, the adoption of the more illustrious title. This Mr. Greenwood (happily so designated, since he was never known to use *seasoned timber* in any building with which he was connected) and the senior Churchwarden of Milford were great allies, and such being the case, it is only wonderful how Milford church had escaped being beautified by him. However, the present occasion seeming a fair opportunity to give his brother-in-law a helping hand, and not being without a vague suspicion that by advancing money to his needy relative at usurious interest, he might himself turn a penny by the job, Mr. Kirkscrew listened to the suggestion with extreme satisfaction, thanked Mr. Spokes for making it, and added, that for his part it appeared to him to obviate every difficulty.

The assembled parishioners seemed quite of the same opinion; and so it fell out that a meeting which commenced with discord, terminated with very decent appearances of unanimity. The only

obstacle of any kind (for there is no rose without a thorn) was the expense: but they might get a grant from the Church Building Society, and Sir Peter Pinfold was very generous, and there were many ways now-a-days of getting money for church repairs.

So it was settled that the galleries were to be erected,—the fourpenny levy was granted nem. con., —Messrs. Macfuss and Kirkscrew were deputed to wait upon the Baronet, and ask his aid,—and then the meeting broke up.

But Sir Peter was, as it turned out, by no means an admirer of the contemplated arrangements; he thought the galleries would utterly disfigure the church, and destroy the beauty of its proportions. "It was quite right," he said, "that people should have pews, and everybody be accommodated; and he was sure that by a new arrangement plenty of room would be found for everybody."

"But your own pew, Sir Peter? we cannot move that...."

"Why not?" asked the Baronet interrupting him.

"Oh, we have no right or wish to ask you to

sacrifice your present commodious seat, which has so long been attached to the Grange; but it is so placed that without moving it very little could be done towards a re-arrangement."

"Pray don't let my pew, then, be any obstacle in way, Mr. Kirkscrew; pull it down tomorrow if you please. If you will only give me the necessary amount of room, that is all for which I stipulate."

Mr. Kirkscrew desired nothing less than such a concession; he had felt strong in the conviction of the Squire's well-known obstinacy; and doubtless, if there had been no question of erecting galleries, Sir Peter might, and probably would have vehemently opposed the destruction of his pew; but whether it was that obstinate people are occasionally wayward and capricious, or whether the Baronet magnanimously resolved to choose the least of two evils, we do not pretend to say: certain, however, it is, that the Churchwarden was utterly taken aback by Sir Peter's decision: he had never anticipated that the Squire could be indifferent about maintaining the grand pew in its original dimensions, and he felt that so long as that pew stood, all the other shape-

less boxes might be preserved intact. But here were all his visions of security annihilated in a moment. However, it was necessary that he should say something, so after blundering, and hesitating, and thanking the Baronet for his condescension, and so forth, he was forced to confess that he believed the other pew-holders in the parish would be more unyielding than Sir Peter, and that they had one and all a strong repugnance to any changes.

"And pray, Mr. Churchwarden, who is to pay for these galleries?" asked the Baronet who now began to comprehend the real state of the case.

"Why, Sir," answered Mr. Kirkscrew, "that is a point on which we wished to consult you. Burdened, as the parish is, we cannot be expected to do much from the rates; but we hope individual liberality will aid us considerably."

"Humph," said the Baronet.

"And then," continued the Churchwarden, "we can get something from the Diocesan Society."

"Well?" said Sir Peter, as drily as before, "and you think this will be sufficient?"

"No, I fear not;" replied Mr. Macfuss, "but

perhaps some of the ladies will undertake to levy shilling contributions from the public. The penny postage gives wonderful facilities that way." While the Curate said this, he fixed his eyes so intently on Lady Pinfold who was sitting at the other end of the room, that she felt she was expected to take a part in the conversation: and therefore good-naturedly exclaimed, "Dear me, if I can be of any use, I am sure I shall be happy to assist you, Mr. Macfuss,"—and then she stopped short, for she saw Sir Peter looking as if he would like to beat her,—"that is, if it is a sort of thing that.... that.... that I could do. But I do'nt understand what the method you propose to adopt, is."

"You're a happy woman, my Lady," cried the Baronet; "'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.' I tell you what, Lady Pinfold, I wish you would change correspondents with me; for I rarely open the letter-bag without finding two or three impertinent letters asking me for a shilling."

"But why should'nt poor people ask for a shilling if they want it?"

"It is not the asking for it, but the *way* of asking

that I quarrel with," replied her husband. "I receive a letter,—open it, find in it,—first, an envelope stinking of musk, and directed to a Mrs. Bountiful, or Miss Shillingsworth, or somebody I never heard of, and who for aught I know, may be a swindler: then comes a piece of card cut to hold the money which my amiable correspondent takes it for granted will be sent; and lastly, a handbill like those issued by quack-doctors, and very much in the same strain. It is headed with a text or two of Scripture, just to shew you how excellent the person who sends it must be. After this follows an address in a strain of foot-pad eloquence, 'Stand and deliver! Your money or your life!' concluded by an intimation that if you give 'any much larger sum' than a shilling, the recipient will even go the length of thanking you for it; and thus you will have every reason to hope that a correspondence commenced with so much delicacy, will be permanently continued."

"Ah, now Sir Peter," said his Lady, laughing, "you have got into one of your satirical, ill-natured ways, and so we shall have nothing but abuse of what was at any rate well-meant."

"Pardon me," replied the Baronet, "I do not speak of these people with half the severity they deserve. Just think of the mischief they do by taking merit to themselves for *only* asking for a shilling. If a work of Christian Charity is to be done, let Christian people be called upon to give according to their means; do'nt encourage the miserable covetous spirit of the age, by falling into the canting humbug of asking for sixpences and shillings, *because* their loss will never be felt. Depend upon it, the people who set this sort of machinery going must be specially careful of their own pockets; you may rely on it, that they practise this part of their preaching."

"Perhaps, Sir Peter," remarked Mr. Kirkscrew, "you are not aware what large sums may be collected this way. A lady who lives in the city, Mrs. Scraper, got £1,500 before she had got to the letter M in the London Directory. And Mrs. Gratis, whom I dare say you know, Sir Peter, as she lives in this neighbourhood, has got £400 very lately. Pinchley Vicarage is but a small house, and Mr. Gratis has only one other living, and there is a large family, and they wanted more room, and the out-

houses were dilapidated, so Mrs. Gratis sent out letters for shilling-contributions, and got enough money to build a nursery, and a coach-house; to erect a fresh set of pig-styes, and put up a very handsome gold and white paper in the drawing room. To be sure Mrs. Gratis is a very clever managing woman, and she had need to be with so many children. But I do believe she gives away hundreds in charity yearly; yet it never costs her or her husband a farthing. Of course she has a great deal of trouble in collecting so much money, but she is not particular in asking, and she gets it somehow."

"Well, I must declare at once," said Lady Pinfold, turning to Mr. Macfuss, "that I cannot lend myself to such a scheme as this: every shilling I received would make me blush for my own meanness. I shall be happy to give you a donation,—(and if the galleries are dispensed with, it shall be a large one)—but you must forgive my declining to levy contributions after the Gratis fashion."

"Quite right! my Lady!" ejaculated Sir Peter. "Out upon such quackery and nonsense! And, my dear, let us lay it down as a rule for the time to come,

that if either of us receive any letters from these good folks who would be charitable at other people's expense, to acknowledge the receipt, by informing our correspondents that we will forward their communication (as we do all begging letters) to the Mendicity Society. And now, gentlemen, with respect to the business in hand, I hate galleries, and wo'nt give a six-pence towards them, but if you choose to re-pew the church properly, I am quite ready to sacrifice my pew, and to contribute my quota to your funds."

And Sir Peter wished his visitors good morning, nothing doubting that the gallery scheme would be dropped. But he was disappointed. The ancient pew-holders would not be disturbed, and Mr. Kirkscrew was anxious to benefit himself and Mr. Greenwood; and accordingly, in a few months, two galleries were reared, one above another, at the west-end of the church, and another dragged its slow length adown the aisle, cutting the arches of the nave in two, and converting the venerable fabric into as hideous a preaching-house as eyes could see.

And then came the usual result: the folks who had pews under the gallery were now outrageous

because they were all in the dark; others declared that the atmosphere was so close and confined, that they could not go to church without feeling faint, or going to sleep. One lady left off coming to Divine service because she said that one of the new cast-iron pillars obstructed her view of the preacher: another became an attendant at the meeting-house in an adjoining parish, because she *(being one in family)* could only have half of one of the new pews: and several of those who had battled most earnestly for the possession of a pew, when they had once fairly secured it, never came near it.

Meanwhile, Sir Peter Pinfold thinking that his wishes had not been sufficiently consulted, was in high dudgeon with the Curate and the Churchwardens, and would contribute nothing to the list of donations. And to sum up all, the galleries had not been erected much more than a year, before the most unequivocal symptoms of dry-rot began to exhibit themselves, and Mr. Greenwood's timbers looked as if they had been selected from the Fungus-pit at Woolwich.

The galleries, therefore, became in a short time

a more fruitful cause of dissension than even the pews had been,—and the people who sat under them declared that they were in constant expectation of their coming down upon their heads. Poor Mr. Macfuss fretted and fidgetted, and tried to make peace and erect props, but he failed in both points; the props were of no use, and peace seemed to have fled from Milford Malvoisin. Party feeling grew higher than ever; Mr. Kirkscrew resigned his office of Churchwarden, and what would have become of the unlucky Curate in this war of elements it is hard to say; happily, however, for him, when the hubbub was at its height, his eyes glanced upon the following advertisement in the Ecclesiastical Gazette:—

"Wanted, a Clergyman of orthodox sentiments, and evangelical opinions, as Assistant Curate in a fashionable watering-place. As his duties will bring him into contact with the higher ranks, it is deemed essential that he should have a prepossessing exterior, and gentlemanly address. The salary is £80 a year, with the advantages of introduction to the best society, and (in consequence) few expences of house-

keeping. Direct to A. M., Post Office, Seahampton.

"N.B. The gentleman must be approved by the ——— Society."

The last paragraph certainly rather staggered Mr. Macfuss, for though he had not hitherto given himself much trouble about Church principles, it did seem rather a strong measure for any Society to assume to itself episcopal functions and jurisdiction. However, every day shews that people may reconcile themselves to anything, and as Mr. Macfuss—(like a peer of the last century, of whom it was said, that it might be equally predicated of him, that he was a high-spirited nobleman on a long-tailed horse, or a long-tailed nobleman on a high-spirited horse)—as Mr. Macfuss had no doubt that he was possessed of orthodox sentiments, and evangelical opinions, or orthodox opinions, and evangelical sentiments, as the case might require, (and indeed he had full as much of one as of the other); and as, moreover, his grandmother had invariably spoken of him as possessing a beautiful exterior, and gentlemanly address; know-

ing, too, that he was six feet high, and had remarkably good teeth; and lastly, being fond of polite society and sea bathing, he determined to apply for the Curacy, and having satisfied the Committee who "sat upon him" on all the above points, he received the nomination, and in three months quitted the quarrels of Milford Malvoisin, for the fashionable chapel at Seahampton, where there were three tiers of galleries, and no dry-rot, and where the ladies of his congregation presented him before the year was over with an elegant set of robes, a diamond ring, and three dozen pocket-handkerchiefs of the finest French cambric.

CHAPTER IX.

All's well, that ends well.

As when in tumults rise the ignoble crowd,
Mad are their notions, and their tongues are loud,
And stones and brands in rattling vollies fly,
And all the rustic arms which fury can supply—
Then if some grave and pious man appear,
They hush their noise, and lend a listening ear.

Dryden's Virgil.

It has been already mentioned that there was no resident Rector at Milford Malvoisin. Mr. Clerke, who was the incumbent during the period of which we have been speaking, had another living, Misterton Malvoisin, some five miles off, and there he had dwelt for more than half a century; but for some years past age and infirmities had reduced him to a taste of childishness and imbecility, and he presented

to his friends that sight which is the most trying and distressing to witness, — existence, when existence has become a burden, through failure of the intellectual powers, and inability to discharge the duties of life. The pastoral superintendence of both his parishes had, therefore, for some time past devolved solely upon Curates, and this state of things, had not been without its evils, and perhaps the longer it continued the worse matters would have become. It was consequently a most fortunate circumstance,— considering how injudiciously Mr. Macfuss had acted, and how difficult the position of his successor would inevitably be, that that successor came not with the more limited means and contracted authority of a Curate, but as a Rector who was about to fix his permanent residence in the parish. Within a month after Mr. Macfuss's departure to Seahampton, good old Mr. Clerke died, and Mr. Till, a gentleman who had been for some years engaged in the labours of a town parish, and who had thereby gained much experience in parochial matters, was nominated to the living.

And a happy appointment it was for the inhabi-

tants of Milford; for Mr. Till was not only an active and zealous parish-Priest, but one whose activity was guided by discretion, and whose zeal was according to knowledge. Moreover, he was one who was thoroughly imbued with Church principles, and who felt that on carrying out the Church-system in his parish the *permanent* success of his labours would depend. He knew full well that there was an easy road to popularity, and perhaps celebrity, for those who choose to make themselves conspicuous: there is a religious as well as a political agitation: and it is to be feared that in the former as well as in the latter, the agitator has the same object, the ultimate aggrandizement of *self*. It is not difficult for one who is full of himself, his own zeal, his own devotion, his own earnestness, to obtain for a short time a very great influence, and to raise himself in popular estimation, far above many who are his superiors, not less in intellect, than in the graces of humility and self-discipline. But a position so obtained is rarely lasting; it is like "fire among the thorns, giving a momentary blaze, and then dying away for ever:"—and even where a celebrity of this description con-

tinues permanently, it is attended with little advantage either to the individual, or to his flock; the one remains self-deceived, the other fails to produce the expected fruit. "We looked for much," as the Prophet saith, "and, lo, it has come to little."

On the other hand, he who thinks of himself as nothing, and the Church and the Church's cause as every thing, who feels his true position as one among many brethren; who looks on man's praise as a snare, and on ambition as a sin; who is content to be useful instead of being admired; who endures hardness, and multiplies watchings, and fastings, and prayers, in preference to the easy, comfortable religion of the day; such an one, though he may remain unnoticed by the world, will gradually be building up,—while men sleep, and they know not how,—an edifice, not of wood, hay, or stubble, but of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and which shall assuredly stand on that day when "the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."—And more than this, his influence shall extend, and the seed which he sowed bear fruit, even long and long after he himself is forgotten. Such a man was Mr. Till. Like Hooker,

whom Walton describes as an "obscure, harmless man; a man in poor clothes, of a mean stature, and stooping, and yet more lowly in the thoughts of his soul: his body worn out, not with age, but study and holy mortifications." Like Hooker, the new Rector had little in his personal appearance to attract or prepossess, and when he arrived at Milford those who first saw him thought that one so pale and emaciated would soon make way for another incumbent. When they heard him in the reading desk too, they were quite disappointed: "it was," they said, "just as if he was saying his prayers in his own chamber, and he seemed quite unconscious of the presence of the congregation." The fact was they were so used to hearing Mr. Macfuss *preach* the prayers, that they were on the look-out for fine intonations and grand effects, and so they could not appreciate one who was too much absorbed in what he was doing, to consider the impression he was making on those around him. He was thinking too much of the prayers, and of Him to whom they were addressed, and of those for whom as God's Priest he was interceding, to think of himself; and so he was not try-

ing to throw a "larmoyant" tone into the Confession, and an authoritative one into the Absolution, and so forth; the subject was too awful to be trifled with: he was in earnest, not acting; and consequently being only distinct in his enunciation, and being quite plain and simple in his delivery, his parishioners thought as they said, that he was "nothing out of the common way." So, likewise, in the pulpit, to persons who were expecting mouthing, and action, and the tricks of our modern popular preachers, Mr. Till gave little satisfaction, for to adopt once more the words of Hooker's biographer "his sermons were neither long nor earnest," (i. e. impassioned) but uttered with a grave zeal and an humble voice: his eyes always fixed on one place to prevent his imagination from wandering; insomuch that he seemed to study as he spake. The design of his sermons, as indeed of all his discourses, was to shew reasons for what he spake; and with these reasons such a kind of rhetoric, as did rather convince and persuade, than frighten men into piety; studying not so much for matter—which he never wanted,—as for apt illustrations, to inform and teach his un-

learned hearers by familiar examples, and then make them better by convincing applications ; never labouring by hard words, and then by needless distinctions and sub-distinctions *to amuse his hearers, and get glory to himself; but only glory to God.*" —Mr. Till, therefore, during the first fortnight of his incumbency, was considered to be decidedly inferior to Mr. Macfuss.

But not many weeks had passed before the Milford critics began to discover that they had made a mistake. Mr. Macfuss had certainly, at one period, more variety than his successor; for as has been already said, having no settled opinions, his theology at the commencement of his career, had as many alternations from hot to cold, and from cold to hot, as the thermometer itself, but having latterly become more of a party man, he had but one sermon, though of course a sufficient variety of texts and beginnings to head it withal, so that it had become a sort of by-word among his flock, when any body asked what the Curate had been preaching about, to answer, "Oh, just the old story!"—With Mr. Till it was different. Nobody could say that he was undecided

in his opinions, and yet nobody could say that he did not give sufficient prominency to every doctrine in the circle of Christian truth. Without making any professions of his zeal in declaring "the whole counsel of God," it was the object at which he laboured continually; and so at length his people gradually discovered, and that although there was little of noisy declamation "to interest and excite" them, they were always sent home enlightened by a clear and distinct statement on some important subject, and faithfully warned and exhorted to the discharge of some Christian duty. So with regard to the Prayers, they found themselves thinking nothing at all about the reader, as they had been wont, but giving their attention more fully and undistractedly to what he was saying. And lastly, (for such is often the result of very hasty conclusions) they began to veer round, and change their opinions with respect to his personal appearance. Some wondered that they had not earlier discovered what piercing eyes he had, some found out that he had such a pleasant voice, and all said that every feature in his countenance bespoke him to be a *good* man. It was quite true

that Mr. Till had all these advantages; but the parishioners of Milford did not find them out till they were unconsciously yielding to an influence, such, as till now, had never been exercised over them: their respect and regard were bestowed insensibly; their hearts had been stolen away, as it were, by stealth.

The state of his church was, of course, one of the first points to which the new Rector directed his attention, and was a subject of much anxious thought. He had sufficient knowledge of Ecclesiastical architecture to be able to form a general notion of what ought to be done, and was prudent enough to see that for practical details it was far better (and probably *cheaper*) to obtain the aid of a first-rate architect, than to commit himself to the tender mercies of a builder.

Accordingly, he lost no time in putting himself in communication with a gentleman, who was not only a person of great taste and experience, but was an enthusiastic admirer of Gothic architecture, had a reverential feeling for antiquity, and fully understood the Catholic arrangements of a church. It is need-

less to say that such a man would make no wanton and unnecessary alterations, and that he would not do anything to destroy the unity of the original design.

One of the first questions which Mr. Waynflete asked Mr. Till, after carefully surveying the Sacred fabric, was whether he intended merely to put the edifice in a decent state, or to restore it (so far as possible) to the condition in which it must have been antecedent to its spoliation by the Puritans.

I would transmit it to those that come after me," replied the Rector, "in as perfect a state as on the day of its consecration. The *parish*, of course, can only be *required* to keep the building in an adequate state of repair, but that will not content me. Some of my flock, I do not doubt, will feel it as great a privilege as I do myself to be allowed to contribute towards the funds which will be required for the larger measure of restoration contemplated by me; but whether they do or not, I am resolved that the work shall be done:—if by myself alone so much the greater my happiness."

"But my good Sir," answered the Architect, "the sum required will be at least two thousand pounds."

"So little?" said Mr. Till, "I should not have been surprised if you had named a larger sum."

Mr. Waynflete looked surprised, for he knew that his friend's means were very limited, and that the living was not worth more than £350 a year.—"I beg your pardon," said he, at length, "but you seem to me to contemplate a very rash proceeding."

"Why?" asked the incumbent of Milford.

"Because you have all the expenses before you, which taking possession of a new living involves. You have a parsonage to furnish from the garret to the cellar, you...."

"Excuse me," replied Mr. Till, "I shall require a bed room, and a sitting room, and a servant's room, and I have brought more than enough furniture with me to accomplish that. You don't suppose that I am going to buy couches and arm-chairs, curtains, and carpets, and looking glasses, while my church is in its present condition?"

Mr. Waynflete gazed at his friend as if he thought that he had taken leave of his senses, and exclaimed, "You are not in earnest, surely."

"I am, though!" answered the Rector hastily, and as if he did not wish the discussion prolonged.

"Believe me, Till, I respect your motives most sincerely, but you carry your notions too far: the world will say...."

"My good friend," replied Mr. Till, interrupting the architect, and laying his hand upon his arm, "if you wish to prove to me that I am in error, I am quite ready to listen to you, but, I entreat you, do not do yourself so little justice as to bring forward the opinion of the world as being worth a thought on such a subject as this. However, if you really think the poor world would grow nervous or over-anxious, were it to hear the state of the case, you should reflect that we have the remedy in our own hands. *I*, of course, shall never say whence the funds are derived, and if, as I now do, I beg you to preserve an unbroken silence on the subject, I know that as a friend and a man of honour, I may trust you. My fortune is eight thousand pounds: surely it is no great sacrifice to offer a quarter of it to Him, from whom I have received *all!* It is no sacrifice, but if it were, I would gladly make it as an exercise of faith. God will be no man's debtor."

But the needful funds were not the only things

which it was necessary to obtain before the restoration of Milford Church could be commenced: the pew-holders must be brought to consent to the destruction of their dearly-beloved pews, and this, as Mr. Till well knew, was no easy point to gain, for his experience in a large town had taught him that on no subject connected with the Church do people exhibit such pitiful and unchristian tempers.

As soon, therefore, as he had procured the plans of the proposed alterations, he carried them with him to Milford Grange, and laid them before Sir Peter Pinfold. Our readers, knowing the Baronet's hasty temper, may very naturally suppose that he flew into a passion, and proceeded to *butt* at Mr. Till in the same manner as he had done at the railway Engineers: such, however, was not the case. What his reply might have been if Mr. Macfuss had suggested to him to turn his pew into open seats, it is not difficult to anticipate; he would have done himself the injustice of not giving the matter proper consideration, merely because he did not happen to like the person who made the proposal. But Sir Peter, in spite of his foibles, knew how to appreciate

a person of Mr. Till's character: and when he had listened to the Rector's statement, and the arguments adduced in favour of the alterations, he saw at once the advantages of the plan; and not only cheerfully gave his consent as far as himself and his tenants were concerned, but volunteered a very munificent contribution to the repair-fund.

And so it was with the poor rate-payers, and the petty shop-keepers (some of whom had pews); they all,—with hardly an exception,—were ready to enter into Mr. Till's views, and assured him they felt that he would do better for them than they could do for themselves: they quite agreed with him in thinking that the pews had created a deal of ill-will in the parish, and that the House of God was no place for the animosities of man.

So far all was plain sailing, as the saying is; but Mr. Till knew that his main difficulties were yet to come; the Crabstocks and the Nettleships, the Tuffs and the Kirkscrews, and the Perkys,—these were the class of people who were sure to be violently opposed to him: wealthy farmers who had been accustomed for half a century or so, to connect a

notion of dignity with the possession of a pew, and who thought that dignity was an article which it specially behoved them to carry to church; worthy folks who had a great objection to open seats, and who on being asked *why* they had such an objection, pertinently answered "because they had;" ladies of a certain age who were afraid (for their wrinkles' sake) of being dragged from the obscurity of a pew into the full blaze of day; smart dressers who feared that their dresses would be soiled or rumpled by too close approximation to their neighbours,—all those people, in short, who thought themselves of consequence, and that it was their duty to make themselves of more consequence, were sure to be opponents of any scheme in which the comfort and advantage of the many was to be preferred to that of the few.

And all these parties, with all their different motives of self-interest, Mr. Till had to encounter, and, if possible, to persuade them to lay aside their selfishness, and to consider others as well as themselves. Let one specimen of such a conversation suffice, for the characteristics of rude, undisciplined minds are very much the same in all cases, and are very painful to contemplate.

"I have called on you, Mrs. Tuff," said Mr. Till, on the occasion alluded to, "for the purpose of asking your consent to the removal of your pew, and the substitution of an open sitting in its place, when the repairs of the church shall be completed."

"Oh, indeed, Sir? It is something new,—quite new,—*my* being consulted about the disposal of my pew. It is the fashion at Milford church to fill peoples pews with strangers without their permission, and as I may say, to dispose of them altogether. What's the good of coming to ask what you know I shall refuse, and what you will probably do what you will with, in spite of my refusal?"

"In the first place, Madam, I not only did not know that you would refuse our request, but I feel quite persuaded that you will not, upon reflection, oppose yourself to any plan which is fraught with advantage to your fellow-parishioners."

"I have a right to my pew, Sir, and I shall stand by my rights."

"Have you any faculty for the seat you occupy?"

"No, Sir; but the town-book allotted my present pew to Vinegar Hill Farm, a hundred years ago,

and, therefore, as the pew has always gone with Vinegar Hill, it always will to the end of the world."

"I believe, Madam," answered Mr. Till, "that you are in error as to the law of the case. You have a right to claim to be seated in Milford church, and were no changes necessary, you would, no doubt, be left in undisputed possession of your present pew; but when the parishioners have decided on a re-arrangement of sittings, you cannot, as an individual, claim an exemption from the general rule."

"Ah, I thought there was some quibble to turn me out,—I was sure of it,—you might as well have said so at once."

"I think you mis-understand the state of the case, Mrs. Tuff; your present pew, will, if the parish decide on re-arranging the sittings, be removed, but you will have an adequate number of seats granted you in lieu of those which you now hold; the point, however, which I wish to ascertain from you is, whether you have any objections to an open sitting?"

"Oh! what you want to put me on an equality with my servants, and the alms-house people, and the charity children? I am not going to demean

myself so, I can tell you, Sir. If I can't sit in a pew, I shan't come to church."

"I grieve to hear you say so, Madam;" answered Mr. Till, "there are many ways in which people jeopard their souls, but to do so because you cannot sit in a deal box does seem to me quite incomprehensible. Why should there be distinctions of rank kept up in the House of God? Surely the rich and poor may meet there on equality."

"I shan't sit cheek by jowl with my ploughmen, I can tell you," exclaimed Mrs. Tuff, angrily.

"You are not called upon to do so," answered Mr. Till; "but if you cannot associate with your dependents in praise and prayer on earth, how will you tolerate communion and fellowship with them hereafter? You would not have one Heaven for the Rich and another for the Poor?"

Mrs. Tuff looked as if she desired nothing better, but she forbore to say so,—and Mr. Till continued: "Church, Madam, is the place, where, if anywhere, in this world, all are upon an equality; and it is good for us all to be reminded that such is the case. So shall there be neither undue exaltation or abase-

ment; the rich will not consider their poorer brethren as their inferiors, nor the poor feel unworthy to mix in the devotions of their worldly superiors."

"Well! really, I never heard anything so shocking!" cried Mrs. Tuff. "You a Clergyman, Sir! and preaching such levelling, jacobinical, democratic, radical doctrines. I wonder what we shall hear of next!"

Mr. Till did not think it necessary to defend himself from the charge of being a leveller: he felt he was wasting time, so hastened to bring matters to a crisis. "I am to understand, then, Mrs. Tuff," said he, "that you altogether oppose yourself to the proposed changes?"

"Yes, Sir," replied the lady, in a very decided tone; "and I suspect you won't find three people in the parish who will consent to give up their pews."

"I have already found that my poorest and my richest parishioners make no difficulty about it."

"Oh, I dare say not," answered Mrs. Tuff; "but that is easily accounted for."

"In what manner?" asked the Rector.

"Sir," rejoined the tenant of Vinegar Hill, "the

middle class in society object to open pews in the church, while the highest and lowest prefer them, because we in the middle classes are much more moral and religious than the other two ranks."

Mr. Till was prepared for a good deal from the lips of such a disputant; but the humility and modesty of this last speech was beyond what any body could have expected. He remained silent from amazement; but was soon not a little amused to find Mrs. Tuff taking up a totally different line of argument.

"Yes, Sir," she continued, "it is our piety, not our pride, that makes us prefer closed pews; we are bidden to pray in secret, and thus we would fulfil the commandment, keeping ourselves unobserved where no external objects distract the attention, and the words of the preacher come more home to our hearts."

"Do you seriously mean, Madam, to refer to *public* worship, a command, which, from its very wording shews that it was directed wholly and solely to *private* prayer?"

"I know this, Sir, though I am no Divine, that

the Bible tells me when I pray to enter into my closet, and shut to the door. Is not my pew my closet? and how can I shut to the door in an open sitting?"

"You would assert, then," asked Mr. Till, "that all *public* worship as such, is an infringement of our blessed Lord's command; that if the poor, for instance, who have no pews, pray in open sittings, their prayers, under such circumstances, are an act of presumption and disobedience; and that in point of fact it is quite an error to offer 'Common Prayer' in common?"

Mrs. Tuff not having quite seen whither her absurd doctrine would lead her, was for the moment silenced, so the Rector availed himself of the opportunity to point out the utter inappropriateness of the passages cited by her, reminded her of the Apostolical injunction that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, set strongly before her the social character of every part of the services of the Church, and shewed unanswerably that for persons to come to God's House, and then with their pews and their exclusiveness to shut themselves off—(or

rather to attempt to do so, for the thing is impossible, and external objects are just as visible and distracting in pews as elsewhere)—to shut themselves off from all companionship with their fellow-worshippers, cannot be otherwise than an offence to God and the Church.

Mrs. Tuff had nothing to allege against what was in truth unanswerable, so she shifted her position once more.

"It seems to me," she said, "that after all, a great deal more is said against pews than would be the case if you did not think them unsightly. You talk of them as if you thought them wrong in themselves. I believe your only object in getting rid of them is to make the church look better."

"It is *one* object, Madam, and a very great and important one, but the *main* reason I have already alleged."

"Well, I think you will destroy the Church with all your innovations: you are encouraging dissent to established forms by destroying pews, and you will make people papists and methodists with your changes. And it is all pride, and not humility; and you are aiding the radicals by altering ancient customs; and

you will upset the monarchy, Sir, as well as the pews, and in short, I dont know what you wo'nt do. And I intend to maintain my property against all invasion of my rights, and I shall see whether Mr. Blackadder will not recommend me to take the law of the Church-wardens, if they presume to touch my pew. And so you have your answer, Sir."

Such was a sample of the sort of persons Mr. Till had to deal with, and such is a fair specimen of the sort of arguments by which they advocate the Pew-system. It is not meant that all who were unwilling to enter into his views addressed their Pastor with the coarseness and offensiveness which Mrs. Tuff exhibited, but still there was much to disgust and discourage the new incumbent. Mr. Till, however, bore all the angry opposition which threatened him, with imperturbable good nature. He was wise enough to look upon such out-breaks as that of the tenant of Vinegar Hill, as by no means cutting off his hope of ultimate success. "Thunder storms clear the air," he was wont to say. And when he had listened with patience to some long pent-up explosion of

wrath, he felt that he had, as it were, got one obstacle out of his way; there was hope of his angry parishioner becoming a patient listener in turn.

And so it generally happened that the next time the subject was broached it was received more favourably. A third conversation led to more definite results, and when at last, two or three sturdy opponents had been won over, people began to find out that the demolition of pews would not necessarily involve an abolition of the rights of property, or the overthrow of Church and State; all animosity gradually died away, and before the next Vestry meeting assembled, it was generally known that the only determined opponents whom neither Mr. Till's kindness, nor his discretion, nor his arguments, could conciliate, or win over, were a drunken overseer who never came to church, and a maiden lady on the shady side of fifty, who, having been brought up among dissenters, very naturally loved her pew as being of presbyterian origin, and as presenting to her mind a comfortable kind of link between the Church and the Conventicle.

It is needless to say, that under such circumstances, the work of restoration was speedily com-

menced, and proceeded without interruption; and so evident was the improvement produced by getting rid of the pews, that many of those who had most vehemently opposed the change, and who even now had no interest in the work as a matter of taste, were heard to wonder how anybody could sit in a pew, when an open sitting could be had.

After Mr. Till himself, Sir Peter Pinfold was probably the most diligent inspector of the progress of the carpenters and masons at Milford Malvoisin, and so regularly and continually was he at his post, that he might have been mistaken for Mr. Waynflete's clerk of the works. The repairs, however, commencing at the West-end, it was some time before it became necessary to pull down the Grange Pew; so Sir Peter had the satisfaction of seeing the area of the nave gradually cleared, till nothing was left to obstruct the view of the Altar, but Mr. Blote's spacious inclosure.

"Now then," cried the Baronet, as he saw the workmen approaching to demolish it, "now then we shall soon see daylight," and with that he sent his foot against one of the old panels with so much vehe-

"Churches as they were, and as they will be." p. 221.

mence, that he stove in no inconsiderable portion of the rickety frame-work. Having thus set the example, he turned on his heel, and proceeded to the tower, to watch from thence the effect of the removal of his pew,—but as he had to make his way over broken benches and other obstacles, the carpenters, who were in high glee at the late vigorous demonstration, contrived to make such short work, that when he turned round, the object which had so long disfigured the church was gone, the fair proportions and design of the Sacred edifice were no longer obscured, and the eye glanced from end to end through a perspective as beautiful as it was uninterrupted.

"So perish every pew, in every church, throughout the country!" exclaimed Sir Peter, as he turned to Mr. Till who was standing at his side. "Perverted taste, perverted feeling, perverted principles have reared them, and we have borne with them so long, only because habit had accustomed us to the abomination! Surely, surely, Mr. Till, when a few churches in every County shall have been restored to their pristine state, we may hope that people's eyes

will be opened, and they will see the error of which they have been guilty."

"They need not wait for so slow a process, Sir Peter," replied the Rector, "if they will only turn to their Bibles, they will find that the case of pew-holders has been already anticipated and condemned, and if they wish to save themselves and their neighbours from the fate of those who despise "Christ's little ones," they will read with awe, the Apostolic warning, and act upon it promptly and decidedly. 'My brethren,' saith St. James,* 'have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. FOR IF THERE COME INTO YOUR ASSEMBLY A MAN WITH A GOLD RING, IN GOODLY APPAREL, AND THERE COME IN ALSO A POOR MAN IN VILE RAIMENT; AND YE HAVE RESPECT TO HIM THAT WEARETH THE GAY CLOTHING, AND SAY UNTO HIM, SIT THOU HERE IN A GOOD PLACE: AND SAY TO THE POOR, STAND THOU THERE, OR SIT HERE UNDER MY FOOTSTOOL: ARE YE NOT THEN PARTIAL IN YOURSELVES, AND ARE BECOME JUDGES OF EVIL THOUGHTS? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world,

* James ii. 1—6.

rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?—BUT YE HAVE DESPISED THE POOR!'"

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